

Commonweal

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FEBRUARY 16, 1979

Brian Wicker

SIGNS OF 'THE TIMES'

Lawrence S. Cunningham

POLITICAL IDIOT—& SAINT

William V. Shannon

RFK—AN UNFINISHED MAN



WELCOME TO THE NEW CLASS

JAMES T. BARRY

WHAT IT IS, WHY IT MATTERS

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SCENES—A SHORT STORY

Colin L. Westerbeck, Jr.

CALIFORNIA SOUR

Abigail McCarthy

FAR AWAY AND LONG AGO

Philip Terzian

TV DISCOVERS MORA



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Correspondence

Wallow in bliss

Jersey City, N.J.

To the Editors: Anne Makletzoff's article on early days in Friendship House in Harlem and Chicago [Dec. 22] had me wallowing in nostalgia. I found myself breathing the air of those years, filling my lungs with it, living it. Round and round in my head went Wordsworth's lines about the French Revolution:

Bliss was in it that dawn to be alive

But to be young was very heaven.

There was so much Catholic hope, such a surging vitality, so many Catholics on the move.

We knew where we were, we knew where we wanted to go, the Faith was the Faith, sin was sin, Jesus was the Christ, and Mary was his Mother. We saw the defects of the institutional church and saw them as peripheral. Christ was the point, the center point. The doctrine of the Mystical Body had just been rediscovered (Robert Hugh Benson's *Christ in the Church* had come out only twenty years before) and there was intoxication in it. We dreamed of the whole country getting from Christ in his church all that we ourselves were getting.

We felt like young Bellocs and Chestertons, the more learned among us like young Maritains. Thomas More was alive in Chicago as he was not in his own Chelsea. Conversions at the University of Chicago had us thinking about Newman's Oxford Movement of a hundred years earlier.

The laity were mounting the outdoor platforms of the Catholic Evidence Guild in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Pittsburgh, New Orleans. We talked happily of platforms in every corner of every city. There are still two laymen and one woman speaking outdoors in New York! Anywhere else? We had thought we were in the front line. We have found ourselves in the last ditch.

So my nostalgia ends somberly, and one can't wallow in somberness. But I

thank Anne Makletzoff for the golden memory.

FRANK SHEED

The middle yeast

Farmington Hills, Mich.

To the Editors: I read with interest Mrs. Makletzoff's article on Friendship House [Dec. 3], but I object to her statement "how oppressed I am to this day by the hatred and indifference of middle class society" to the blacks. Shades of the 1960s when it was fashionable to hate the middle class.

First, I believe that the basic problem is fear, not hatred and indifference. Until we face this powerful emotion and deal with it, we will not solve the problem of interracial justice.

Second, as to the seeming disparagement of middle class, perhaps our greatest failure is that we have not been able to export our idea of the middle class to third and fourth world nations. The result has been the dichotomy between slave and master, the same division that helped to bring on the Civil War in America or, in terms of serf and aristocracy, that produced the Communist Revolution in Russia. The existence of a middle class really encourages freedom and a peaceful evolution. It may not satisfy the vertical mind's desire for instant individual perfection or martyrdom. But it does offer more opportunities to be yeast in the dough because there is more bread to go around.

What do such people as Mrs. Makletzoff wish for black people except that they can join the middle class?

VIRGINIA M. MITCHELL

Belfast 'Telegraph'

Belfast, Northern Ireland

To the Editors: I have only lately seen a copy of your article of August 4th, headed "In Belfast No More Songs." With the tone of this article (or indeed of any article in any paper) it is a waste of time to quarrel. Facts however are another matter; and your writer Raymond A. Schroth seriously misinformed himself in facts about our local evening newspaper, the *Belfast Telegraph*. A

short extract suffices to show this.

He wrote: "The *Telegraph* is part of Lord Thompson's chain. Its 150,000 readers are Unionists, not interested in criticism of the RUC; and an exposé of the IRA or the Ulster Defense Association (UDA) would bring a knock at the door or a bomb through the office window."

But the paper, with individual members of its staff, has frequently received awards for its merit, and however widely or not the awarding body is known, the essence of the matter lies in the fact that the approving voices are no sycophants of British rule or Ulster Unionism, and in the reasons that those voices give. They explicitly refute Raymond Schroth's allegations or implications that the paper 1) serves only one side of our community; 2) takes its orders in editorial policy from the financier who (quite true) owns it; 3) does not venture, in reporting or in leader-writing, to criticize the government or the security forces; 4) is staffed by cowards, not only moral but physical. I quote from quite a long list. 1968, "The Most Influential Irish Newspaper" award, announced by the Dublin fortnightly *Hibernia*. In making the award the panel said, "This independent Unionist paper has followed an honourable and truly liberal role during the recent crisis in the North. Top marks to editor John Sayers and assistant Martin Wallace, who have obviously had to withstand a lot of pressure. And a bouquet to Roy Thompson, whose policy of leaving full editorial discretion to his local editors was so fully evident and justified."

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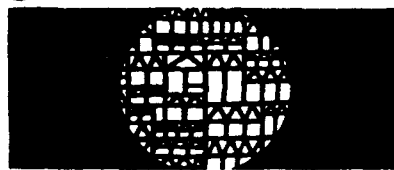
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commonweal



OUR FRIENDS THE CHINESE

THE INTERNATIONAL grand tour of a great leader—whether of Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Teng Hsiao-ping who told us, among other things, that we must do more than pray, or of Pope John Paul II, who told us, among other things, that we must pray more—is, on at least one level, a media event. It is planned and staged to accomplish what it is supposed to symbolize. By focusing world attention on one man who, in his person, sums up the values and aspirations of his own culture as he moves through the cities, farm lands, ritual banquets, industries, sports events, rodeos, shows, songs and dances of an alien way of life—all eyes and ears upon him, testing his patience, flexibility and endurance, measuring every gesture and word for toughness or grace—we try to discover and dramatize those once-hidden ways in which different cultures, although isolated by distance and alienated by history and misunderstanding, are really the same.

Somehow, we feel, if we can simply introduce opposing forces to one another we can heal the wounds of history and even war. Or at least the fact that the opposing forces have been seen together will lead us to believe that the wounds have been or will be healed. But we know that the public face, the image, of the tour can both highlight and obscure some of the deeper issues involved.

The arrival of Teng makes us sharpen our focus on our relations with the Far East: it is a part of the world Americans have long misunderstood through a series of inadequate, historically conditioned concepts—through the 19th-century expansion of the China trade, through the zeal of Christian missionaries to baptize the pagans of the remotest corners of the earth, through our virtually blind commitment to the corrupt regime of Chiang Kai-shek, through our twenty-year persecution of the American diplomats who allegedly “lost” “our” China to the Reds, and our almost twenty-year bloody struggle to maintain our power base in Indochina at the cost of countless lives and our national honor.

In this sense, Teng's arrival, especially when our welcome has been so warm, is a solemn event. It is a potential turning point in modern history, an implicit acknowledgment that—even though the visit coincides with a moderated “democratic” liberalization and perhaps major economic revolution within this still oppressive totalitarian state—many of our past policies have been misguided or wrong.

It is particularly significant how much our formal change in policy, President Jimmy Carter's sudden announcement that we were formally recognizing the government of the People's Republic of China, exchanging visits and expanding trade, took place on China's timing and terms. For the eagerness on our part may represent—besides the Carter administration's need to distract public attention from the disaster suffered by “our side” in Iran—a willingness to free ourselves to some degree from what Sir Denis Brogan called in a 1952 article in *Harper's Magazine*, the American “illusion of omnipotence”—“the illusion that any situation which

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distresses or endangers the United States can only exist because some Americans have been fools or knaves . . .," an illusion which in time contributed to the domestic upheavals of the 1960s and our frustrated and self-destructive attempt to impose *our* solution on the civil war in Indochina where the forces of social and political change were as beyond our control as they had been in China after World War II.

Our new realism, however, need not blunt our moral sense. We should not idealize our former foes or be less idealistic about our treaty obligations or our support of human rights. Traveler Teng brought with him some morally questionable baggage—including his long (though now muted) support of the murderous Pol Pot regime in Cambodia which may have killed a tenth of its own population. And now he is threatening to invade Vietnam to punish it for seizing Cambodia.

By the same token, our own Cambodian hands are not clean. At the White House dinner, a table away, sat the former president who had both reopened the door to Red China and, in our 1970 Cambodian bombing and invasion, as Stanley Karnow wrote recently in the *Washington Post*, "turned that bucolic land into a battlefield, unleashing the forces that are still fighting there today—and that may go on fighting for years to come."

Conservative opposition to Carter's decision—for example, the editorial in the *New Republic* (January 6, 1979) and William Buckley's collected columns in *National Review* (January 19, 1979)—has stressed our alleged immoral abandonment of Taiwan and our failure to exact a higher price for our shifting gears—perhaps a formal guarantee that China would not take Taiwan by force, or perhaps more evidence that China could pay for all the 747s, Coca Cola, space technology, oil drilling equipment, computers, tractors, tooth brushes, deodorants, and Pierre Cardin scarfs they would buy. (If renewed China trade could really boost our economy substantially, would that make the deal more moral?)

We should be cautious in expecting that a dose of capitalism will make our new friends the Chinese more like us, more free; and the critics have a point, in the abstract, on our fidelity to our treaties. Yet, our original agreement with Taiwan did allow us to end it when we wished; and we would have been willing to keep diplomatic relations with the Taiwan government if it stopped pretending it was the government of China. Meanwhile, judging from Teng's recent statements, from

China's practical inability to launch an offensive against Taiwan in the near future, and from the divided political situation on Taiwan itself, there is a good possibility that this immediate shock may lead to internal reforms on Taiwan where, we tend to forget, the Taiwanese people have been ruled by the Kuomintang Chinese who fled the mainland with Chiang in 1949.

There is another lesson we might draw from the shift in our thinking on Communist China. If today we can receive the leader of the nation that fought us to a standstill in Korea twenty-five years ago, is the time far away when, in spite of the illegality of their invasion of Cambodia and the very mixed feelings we have about its moral consequences for the Cambodian people, we will establish diplomatic and economic ties with Vietnam and Cambodia as well? It can be argued that if we had dedicated ourselves to rebuilding Indochina right after we had destroyed it we would feel less helpless in face of the tragedies unfolding there today.

HALF A BLESSING

The visit of Pope John Paul II to the third CELAM bishops' conference at Puebla, Mexico, plus his extended travels through the countryside, to the Oaxaca Indian festival, to shrines, a rodeo, and one Guadalajara slum, had elements of the grand tour as well. On one level it was his attempt to thrust the force of his personality—and his own particular vision of the church—on one of both promising (half the world's Catholics) and troubled parts of his flock.

At the same time his tour was our test of him. It is one thing to project warmth, to toss children in the air and win the hearts of crowds anxious for a spiritual leader they can love. It is another more difficult task to give spiritual, theological and social direction to the Latin American church at the crossroads. It is a church historically identified with fascist dictators and rich landowners. Only within the last ten years, since the CELAM at Medellin, inspired by a "theology of liberation" which takes as its starting point the lived experience of the people interpreted in the light of the Gospel message, has the church regained contact and credibility with the poor.

We grant that John Paul II was flying into a difficult situation and that some media commentators had oversimplified the nature of the divisions within the church, centering speculation on whether the pope would come out "for" or "against" liberation theology and activist priests. We also know that conservative bishops had controlled much of the conference's planning, that they were so paranoid about open discussion that they refused press credentials to five respected journalists, including Gary MacEoin and two Jesuits, because they disapproved of their past writings. Other things went wrong: in one town authorities kept the crowds back with barbed wire; at Oaxaca, because of different dialects, the Indian audience missed the message; and on one occasion the Pope was hissed when he referred to the "simple joys of the poor." He gave



mixed signals. On Saturday he told priests to stay out of politics, on Sunday he admitted there were occasions when they had to fill in for the laity in political leadership, on Monday he seemed to be calling for a radical redistribution of the land. Nevertheless he pushed himself tirelessly, seemed to respect the work and autonomy of the priests and bishops he addressed, and really loved the crowds, the millions who briefly made public piety a powerful force in the secularized state that historically has had its own bad experiences with clerical political power.

Still, the most disappointing aspect of the Pope's trip was his apparent lack of understanding of both the peculiar Latin American situation and what the theology of liberation really means. His defenders say—as Vatican apologists tend to say of papal statements—that he has been quoted out of context. But a careful reading of the full text of his principal January 28 address to the bishops does not soften the disappointment. Again, like so many Vatican documents, it may be deliberately, diplomatically ambiguous. But then the Vatican must bear responsibility for its misinterpretations. Most of the text is a reiteration of the church's traditional social teaching; one long passage is a description of what liberation means—liberation from all that oppresses man, particularly liberation from sin, liberation as reconciliation. He makes a strong but generalized plea for justice and human rights, condemns torture (without saying who's doing the torturing), kidnapping and abortion, and grants that justice is an essential part of evangelization.

Yet he says nothing that acknowledges the desperateness of the Latin American situation, not a word about the prelates hand in glove with the dictators, or the priests who have been murdered by right-wing terrorists. In short, no sign that he is not in Poland or Rome.

And his much-quoted dismissal of the image of Jesus the "political figure, a revolutionary, as the subversive man from Nazareth," replacing it with the Jesus who "unequivocally rejects recourse to violence," says both too much and too little in a few sentences. Of course it makes sense for him to offset the idea that the gun-toting guerrilla priest is somehow correctly modeling himself on Jesus of Nazareth. But Jesus did not reject violence in cleansing the temple. And Catholic social teaching is not necessarily pacifist; it still allows for the legitimate use of force when there is no other way out of an unjust situation.

Nor does liberation theology claim that Jesus was a violent revolutionary. It does claim that the implications of the Gospel are certainly subversive in a tyrannical state. As Segundo Galilea wrote in *Lumen Vitae* (1978), Jesus rejected political power for himself . . .

But it is also a well-known fact that (as a reading of the Gospels in the light of their socio-political dimension makes clear) Jesus' life and message seriously disturbed established powers, while creating a religious movement with undeniable social implications.

Hence the paradox: Jesus who had always followed a religious line, explicitly refusing all temporal leadership, was finally judged as a subversive figure on the

social plane, as a rival to Caesar's power, and condemned as a political criminal (Lk 23, 2-14).

This was the consequence, on the historical, economic and socio-political plane, of his religious message, liberation from sin. His message signified a criticism of oppressive power, of unjustly acquired wealth, of knowledge possessed only by an elite. He called to his kingdom the poor and the despised.

He denounced all privilege and inequality before the common fatherhood of God. That is why, from then onwards, every genuine historical liberation, every ideal of justice, every option for the poorest and most forsaken members of society can make Him their point of reference.

It is also in this sense that Jesus is the one and only liberator. The theology of liberation does not aim to "politicize" Christ but to draw attention to the political aspect of his religious message.

This does not exactly contradict the Pope, but it makes political commitment integral to rather than secondary to the life of faith. If he had taken this emphasis he would have given Latin American theology and evangelization a clear direction. As it is, the progressive bishops will go ahead and institutionalize the guidelines originally set by Medellín ten years ago, but only half-sure they have the Holy Father's blessing.

TIRED AND TRUE

Dear Commonweal, Two years ago, at the request of Jimmy Carter, I went to work at HEW. Since I'd been born and brought up in Georgia I thought this might have had something to do with my accent. But now it turns out that I talk funny. Every time I make a suggestion, someone says, "Oh, that's the tired rhetoric of the '60s." Could you tell me precisely what the tired rhetoric of the '60s is? I would like to avoid it so I can get some work done around here. Sincerely, Faithful Reader.

Dear Faithful Reader, We'll do our best. The following words are part of the tired rhetoric of the '60s: poverty, equality, justice, limits (when referring to economic growth, American power overseas, non-renewable resources, and the patience of the poor), welfare reform, cities, pollution controls, affirmative action, and dream (as in "I have a . . ."). Take an aspirin and don't use any of these words for a week. See if you don't feel better.

Dear Commonweal, Well at least no one's groaning when I open my mouth. But I'm still not getting much work done. I notice that those who complained a lot about the tired rhetoric of the '60s aren't getting much done either. They seem tired. Do you think there's a connection? Faithful Reader.

Dear Faithful Reader, You're only beginning. Abandoning the tired rhetoric of the '60s is not enough. You will have to adopt the energetic rhetoric of the '70s. That means words like

crisis-of-authority, failure-of-nerve, excess-of-democracy, deregulation, limits (when referring to equality of income, government's ability to foster social change, and the patience of the U.S. with third-world demands), back-to-basics, free lunch (as in "There is no such thing as a . . ."), new class (see page 73), and the tired-rhetoric-of-the-'60s. Swallow four times daily, with a glass of white wine.

Dear Commonweal, I think it's working. Just wrote a memo on "The Excess of Democracy and the New Class's Failure of Nerve in Our Era of Limits." Rafshoon is taking me to lunch. But now I read in Carter's State of the Union: "Two centuries ago a bold generation of Americans risked their property, their positions and life itself. . . . The words they made so vivid are now growing faintly indistinct, because they are not heard often enough. They are words like justice, equality, unity, truth, sacrifice, liberty, faith and love." What's this? Faithful Reader.

Dear Faithful Reader, That is tired '60s rhetoric. Did Rafshoon pay for the lunch?

Report from Britain

SIGNS OF 'THE TIMES'

NO NUDES IS GOOD NEWS

I REMEMBER that when I was in America for a year, back in the late sixties, I always went along to the university library every day to read the latest copy of the London *Times*. I did this not just to find out what was happening back home in England, but also to find out what was happening in other places—including America. The year was 1968-69. We arrived in the middle of Nixon's first election campaign for the presidency. The country was full of politics. But it was quite impossible for an outsider like myself to get the hang of what was going on, or to see the political wood for the trees, either by reading the American press or by watching American television. You needed something more basic, and in a sense more pre-digested than the mass of detail given in the local papers or the political chat-shows on the media. The *Times* was, I found, the answer. What it told you was enough to give you the ability to hold your own at any academic party when, as it always did, the conversation got round to American politics. In fact, by Mid-Western standards at any rate, I think I was reckoned pretty well informed about the political scene.

Perhaps this reminiscence gives some idea of what it means to have the *Times* blacked out by a strike of printers in London. It doesn't mean that every Englishman feels deprived. The average Englishman never reads a word of the *Times* from one year's end to the next. Indeed the majority of the English have probably never read anything in the *Times* at all, despite the

fact that it actually tells you more about the things the average English person wants to know (like football results, racing tips, or who is going out with whom in the Royal family) than any of the papers he or she does read. But this is because the British national newspapers are class-conscious to a degree that is probably unheard of in any other country in the world—just as British society itself is. In fact, the newspapers are probably the most *obvious* manifestation of class division in Britain today. The higher reaches of the middle class—managers, professional people, academics—read one of three papers: *The Times*, the *Guardian*, or the *Daily Telegraph*. While the *Guardian* is vaguely anti-Conservative, whereas the *Times* is mildly pro-Conservative and the *Telegraph* militantly so, the politics of these papers is probably less important than their class-appeal. After all, if newspapers had much political influence, there would never be a Labor government in this country at all. No, class appeal is the key to success. The *Times* used to run an advertisement which blatantly batted on the snobbery of the people who were likely to consider reading it: "Top people read the *Times*" it said, and showed a city gent with a bowler hat and a rolled umbrella to prove the point. The *Guardian* works on the same level of education or money, but its main selling point is, or at least until recently was, its "cleverness"; it appeals to the "intelligentsia" rather than to the solid business people. It has proportionately less about the stock market and more about education and the arts, than the *Times*. It doesn't try to keep up with what used to be called, simply "society," (i.e., the goings-on of the very rich or the titled), but goes instead for what is liberated and "trendy" in intellectual or artistic circles. In its arts pages, it will quite often show a nude scene from a show or film (decorously artistic, of course, and always to illustrate something from the show. But invariably, if there is a nude bit to show, the *Guardian* will show it). I have never seen a nude in the *Times*. The *Telegraph* appeals, I think, to a slightly lower level socially: to clerks and supervisors, to upper middle rather than top people generally. This is why it can afford to be more blatantly conservative, more mean-spirited or "Thatcherish" than its rivals. It is more London-based too: you don't see many people reading it in Birmingham or Blackpool.

The real middle-brow papers, of course, are the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail*. They used, a long time ago, to be the pace-setters among the mass circulation dailies. But nowadays they try to be "family" papers, with something for everyone—old and young, husbands and wives, grandparents and teenagers. What politics they have is right-wing, in a fairly nasty, prejudiced way. But the most obvious thing about them is that they have both gone "tabloid" in recent years—more pictures, less reading matter, smaller in size (easier to handle in the bus-queue or to stuff into a pocket). They have done this mainly in order to keep up with the other two, really popular papers, the *Sun* and the *Mirror*. Most foreigners would find the last two practically indistinguishable. They are made up mainly of gossip, sniggering, nude women, sport and cheap mail-order advertisements. Their opinions are entirely pre-digested for instant easy consumption. No story ever lasts more than about two hundred words (beyond that, they reckon,

boredom sets in), no front-page headline is ever less than about two inches high. Nobody brought up solely on these papers could be anything other than a political, artistic, or scientific moron. Neither could any such reader fail to know everything there is to know, visually at any rate, about the human mammary organs: two of the latter being visible, every day of the week, either on page three (the *Sun*) or page five (the *Mirror*). Actually, on closer inspection, it is just possible occasionally to detect a slight whiff of political interest in the *Mirror* (which claims to be a Labor supporter): and this makes it just a shade more "serious" than its almost totally trivial rival. But this is a very small concession: the overwhelming impression of both papers is that gossip, envy, titillation, armchair sport, astrology, dislike of foreigners, and a profound lack of interest in anything "intellectual" are the hallmarks of the British people.

It was necessary to say all this in order to put the current *Times* strike into perspective. The people it has affected directly are the people who *run* Britain, not the people who just live in it. That is why the strike has caused such a fuss. (Intellectuals and artists don't run Britain: and this is why a *Guardian* strike would never make the international headlines.) It is not that the *Times* has more, or better reporting than any other paper. It is good on some things, less good on others. It is not that the editorials are any more influential than editorials in other papers, though marginally that may be so. It is not even that the correspondence page is a more entertaining, or more instructive one than those of the *Guardian* or *Telegraph*, though that is certainly true. What matters first of all is that the *Times* is the paper which is read by the people who run Britain—the MPs and politicians, the top civil servants and businessmen, the administrators and bankers and insurance-brokers, a large proportion of the academic and professional class, the military and the mighty generally. But, above all perhaps, it is read by *foreigners* who belong to those classes. And this is why, I am quite sure, the current strike, however long it lasts, will not kill the *Times*. What will happen to it is far from clear. Mr. Wedgwood Benn suggested recently it might

be taken over by the BBC (which is its obvious equivalent in electronic terms) but that is very unlikely. Apparently a recently deceased heiress, who acquired twenty-three million pounds at the age of ten through being born into the Shell Oil empire, wanted to buy it at one time. But whoever owns it, I will bet that it won't be allowed to go under. The foreigners, including perhaps *Commonweal* readers, will see to that.

There is one more thing to say on a possibly more serious note. This is that it is not just the *Times*, and the *Sunday Times*, that are off the streets just now. Also affected are the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *Times Educational Supplement* and the *Times Higher Educational Supplement*. For these publications to go out of existence would be very serious indeed for certain groups of people. The *Literary Supplement* is the most prestigious book-reviewing paper in the country, and both authors and publishers must be feeling the pinch over its closure already. Librarians probably buy more books on the strength of it than any other single magazine. Similarly, the teaching profession must be very badly hit by the loss of the *Times Educational Supplement*, and the College and University world by that of the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, because these journals are easily the most important for advertising jobs throughout the country. Anyone who wants a job in a school, college, university, or allied field, looks first of all in those publications. What these people are doing now, I don't know. In their absence, you can't be sure that you've surveyed everything going in the field.

But, despite all this, Britain carries on without the *Times*, because although the *Times* is the paper read by the people who run Britain, the *Times* (contrary to its own opinion) does not actually run Britain itself. To judge from the way the paper reacted to its own demise, one would have not have thought this—yet it is undoubtedly true. Even the rich and powerful in Britain *can* do without the *Times*. But I doubt if those in the rest of the world can. That is why it will carry on—somehow, somewhere, sometime. Quite possibly it will be out again before you read these lines in *Commonweal*.

BRIAN WICKER

Of several minds: *Abigail McCarthy*

FAR AWAY & LONG AGO

MEMORIES OF HALF-FORGOTTEN BATTLES

THE SUNDAY supplements have been full of speculation about Pope John Paul II and the Catholic marxists—how will they deal with each other, they ask. To many of their readers the fact that there are Catholic marxists is

probably startling news. For the past few days I have been living in the past, and from that perspective it seems startling to me, although hardly news. I have been made once more aware of how rapid change is when viewed looking back

over one's shoulder.

Books have a way of disappearing on their shelves, and in the packing, and unpacking for a move, turning up again to remind one of past discoveries, enthusiasms and once dearly-held beliefs. It was so in my recent move. So many volumes turned up, dusty and long unread, which were documents of the pre-Vatican II struggle of the laity to be allowed to be mature members of the church. The battles are half-forgotten now—indeed, often quite incredible—so I hope that readers with more precise

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recall will forgive my lapses as I reminisce.

Who is apt to believe, for example, that when I started collecting many of these books one of the hotly debated questions on Catholic college campuses was whether lay persons could study philosophy at all, let alone confront the dominant philosophies of our time. On some campuses a teacher was suspect if he or she cited Jacques Maritain on Thomas Aquinas, or Heinrich Rommen on the natural law. These authorities were *lay*, after all, and apt to make worldly applications of their teachings.

Those were the days of the rediscovery of Thomas Aquinas. His relevance and that of scholastic philosophy had really been rediscovered for Catholics by “outsiders” like Hutchins and Mortimer Adler at the University of Chicago, and Maritain at the Sorbonne. And Catholics were excited and pleased.

Pleased, however, as the powers that be might have been with the rediscovery of Thomas in such prestigious places, they soon fostered a Thomist school of thought which insisted that all the answers were in Thomas *per se* and that there was no need for an extension of Thomistic thought and method aided by the insights of more recent thinkers or from newer branches of knowledge like anthropology, sociology and psychology. Neo-Thomism was to be scorned, if not actually forbidden.

I discovered that that old conflict was still very much on the mind of the aging Maritain when I leafed through his last book, *The Peasant of the Garonne*, before putting it into a packer’s box. (I have never really read it because I was assured that, as a one-time adherent of Maritain, I would find it disappointingly reactionary but I gleaned enough to find its style the old lucid delight and may well get back to it one day.) He had defined the old problem once again: “. . . when modern philosophy and modern science began (and continued) to make a noise in the world, most of St. Thomas’s disciples remained almost deaf to these wretched murmurs, except to refute them . . . Gradually the Thomists of the schools lost that openness, that feeling for research and progress, that zeal to go to the

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—from *The Critic*, Jan.-Feb., 1971
“Special Catholic Nostalgia Issue”

rescue of truths wherever they were held captive, that *commerce with the real* (italics mine) and with experience, which quickened it in its original source—and above all, the intuitivity which is the life of its life. . . .”

Not only lay students but seminarians as well were advised that, although St. Thomas indeed had all the answers, it was better and safer to read commentaries than St. Thomas himself. I recall a rather giddy pleasure when readable translations became available—high school Latin was not adequate—in finding out for myself. Even had I not been emotionally disposed to do so, it took only the discovery of the 92nd question, Part I, to convince me that Maritain was right. It reads:

As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and is misbegotten, for the active power in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness according to the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from the defect in the active power, or from some material indisposition, or even from some external influence, such as that of a south wind, which is moist. . . .

A little *commerce with the real* in the guise of biology seemed in order. And still does.

There are some of Maritain’s books among others lined up once again on the shelf—*An Introduction to Philosophy*, *Prayer and Intelligence*, *Christianity and Democracy*, *Art and Scholasticism*, *Art and Poetry*. They had to do with the world I lived in then. The latter two remind me of yet another struggle—that of the Catholic writer to be allowed to

transmit reality. What a flurry when we began to teach the works of Claudel, Bernanos, Mauriac! The passionate concern with sin and grace and the wretched of the earth in that literature and in the early works of others, like Graham Greene, was a revelation. Bernanos’s attacks on the bourgeois mentality and the dehumanization of the French workers sear today again as I went through his *Plea for Liberty* once more.

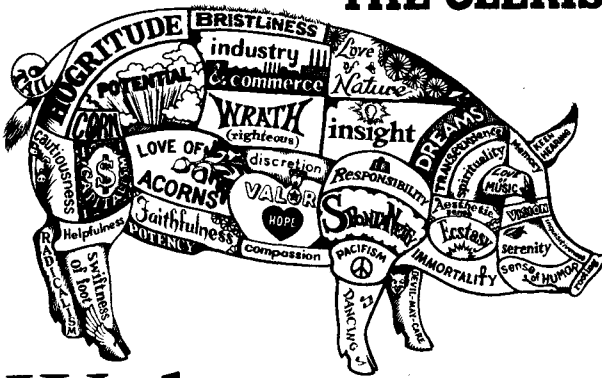
And what of the efforts to secure the autonomy of the lay person in the sphere of politics? Poor John Courtney Murray was having to defend himself because he held that the ideal state was not necessarily a state in which the church was the established church, that the church might well flourish under the separation of church and state. It could be argued seriously then—and was—whether a Catholic in government could remain true to his oath of office and uphold laws not approved by the church. That debate goes on.

I look at *Liturgy and Personality*, to mention only one such book, and remember the long effort to participate in worship, when even to suggest the vernacular was thought subversive. And could a lay person initiate social action? The authorities were not at all sure. Dorothy Day’s *House of Hospitality*—which I remember as being much more immediate in impact than her later books—with its call to serve the poor where they were had had its effect on the campuses, but neither she nor Catherine de Hueck of Friendship House were welcome at every Catholic school.

There are books and memoirs of all the other fresh starts—in labor, the rural life movement, ecumenism. They were struggles being bravely engaged in—at least in the places where I lived and taught—but it depends on the point of view as to whether they were skirmishes on a frontier, harbingers of a fruition to come, or abortive starts which, if they had had full encouragement in their time, would have grown into full-fledged, solidly lay-supported reforms in faith and fidelity to the Gospel which would have forestalled the desperate alternatives of today.

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

THE CLERISY CONFRONTS THE AVANT-GARDE



Welcome to the new class

JAMES T. BARRY

ANOTHER SPECTER is haunting American politics. To the cast of characters who already populate the mystery and morality plays of public events—Big Business, Labor, Government (alias Washington), Minorities, The Public—we have added a new actor. As often happens, this somewhat shadowy figure has been defined and named by those who feel it represents a threat. They have called it the “new class.”

References to the new class are as frequent as they are vague. They appear everywhere from the scholarly journals and literary quarterlies to Mobil Oil advertisements. And most of the references are negative. Many people evidently rue the emergence of what is seen as a kind of mass-produced intelligentsia.

One of the more important dissenters is Irving Kristol. In a series of articles, many of which have been collected in his recent *Two Cheers for Capitalism* (Basic Books, 1978), Kristol characterizes the new class as a major political, cultural grouping which already shares a common ideology: rigid opposition to middle class and business class values. This adversarial ideology is expressed and imposed mainly through governmental action. Regulatory agencies aggressively monitor the minutiae of personal conduct and economic activity. Federal bureaucracies impose affirmative action plans upon private corporations, including universities, which spend federal money. Either the courts or educational bureaucrats, not parents, choose with whom one's child goes to school. The expansion of government and the emergence of the new class go hand in hand. Public power and adversarial intent aggrandize each other. They must be separated before the corrosive effect of their union becomes irreversible.

Kristol does not lament in solitude. Others toiling in this vineyard include Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Norman Podhoretz, Nathan Glazer, Andrew Greeley, Michael Novak,

and Tom Bethel. Called “neoconservatives,” they are the intellectual arm of what is a widespread anti-liberal mood. Among the many points on their agenda, opposition to educated, ambitious liberals stands paramount. Their animus against the new class as they conceive it is intense. So, too, is their dedication to besting it politically.

As to the existence of the new class, there is no question in my mind that the neoconservatives are right. After a fashion, one might say that the new class was born with the G.I. Bill. In the 30 years following the close of World War II, an average of seven million people were enrolled in college annually. This is just about ten times the average annual enrollment rate for the 40 years preceding the war. Obviously, much of the increase in student bodies results from population increases. But more young people are not the only explanation for this explosion. In 1940, only 14.5 percent of the 18-24-year-olds were enrolled in college. During the 1970s that figure reached and exceeded 50 percent.

In these last 30 years we redefined higher education, changing a bastion of privilege (and, oftentimes, of serious intellectual ambition) into a machine of mass production. We did with higher education what we had done with the automobile. Consider how different our social life would be if having a car were as equally inaccessible to the majority as is owning a yacht. Because it was made available to the many rather than to the few, the automobile almost single-handedly fashioned the organization of cities, the conduct of family life, and the rituals of courtship. We now live in an unintended automobile culture.

In much the same spirit of consumer egalitarianism, we pursued the goal of universal higher education. Government, foundations, and parents paid for the dramatic growth in higher education to increase the number of scientists and professionals in the work force, to give a son or daughter a better chance to move upward in the world, or just because education was good for us. They never intended to finance the sea-change in the social order we can now observe. Yet the postwar revolution in higher education will have an impact as momentous as the introduction of the car. Educating so many

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people and infusing them with great expectations about their futures unleashed uncontrollable forces of social change. Already the steady accumulation of college graduates has reached a critical mass; beyond this point they have taken on an unexpected social character. They have become a self-contained economic and political entity.

But this does not mean the neoconservatives are right. The idea of the new class has a utility beyond their purposes and polemics. I do not intend to debate in detail with Kristol *et al.* My disagreement is more fundamental. The new class exists. However, it is far larger and more heterogeneous than the "kristolized" version maintains. We—readers and author—are all members. So, too, is Irving Kristol. So, too, is the entire neoconservative movement.

Values alone do not create a class. Economic realities do. We new class members work in *all* large organizations, in the private corporate order as well as in the public sector. We are not traditional white-collar or blue-collar employees; we are something new. This uniqueness defines new class membership, irrespective of left or right political sentiments. We defy simplification as a class. We should understand ourselves in our full complexity. The knowledge gained from an unenthralled look at ourselves might be painfully unflattering. It could be liberating as well.

THE NEW class is salaried brainworkers. They create, disseminate, or apply knowledge for an employer. A bank economist, a magazine or book editor, an MBA with the federal government, an engineer with private industry, a college professor, an elementary or secondary teacher, and a newspaper reporter are examples of the new class. Over the last 30 years, a huge number of these brainworkers were employed.

The demand for idea people grew for many reasons. The arms race and the competition in space exploration led to ever larger commitments for research and development. The creation of entirely new technologies (in communications and medicine, for example) increased the value of scientists to private industry. The surprising ease with which the economy was mobilized for war led companies to duplicate departments of corporate planning. The national government's postwar commitment to a managed economy and full employment, followed by the discovery of poverty and decaying cities, increased the scope and complexity of decisions made by elected officials.

After the war America appeared to itself larger, more responsible, and more purposeful than at any other time in its history. At the same time, a belief took hold that producing cars was too complicated to leave to boards of directors and unions, and government no longer could be entrusted only to politicians and special interests. The times required experts: there had to be an increase in the brainpower of these enterprises. As reported in Census Bureau data on employment, professional, managerial, and technical occupations grew at an enormous rate after the war. This was the new class in formation.

Examples might be useful here. To start at the top, only five of Jimmy Carter's Cabinet or top advisers are *not* Ph.D. economists. Of these five, three are lawyers (Harris, Califano, and Vance); Harris was once a law professor. Richard Nixon once had four Ph.D.'s in his Cabinet: Kissinger as National Security Adviser and then Secretary of State, James Schlesinger at CIA and Defense, George Schultz at Treasury, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan as chief domestic adviser.

Henry Kissinger is the new class celebrity. As Nixon's National Security Adviser, he employed a staff of highly educated young men and women who were required to think about how foreign affairs issues might unfold well into the future and to prepare reports outlining options for presidential action. This staff reviewed masses of data, thought about issues of great complexity, and used sophisticated techniques of analysis. Behind Kissinger's *bon vivant* public image lay a serious intellectual enterprise. Carter's security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, carries on the work in the same manner, if without the personal panache.

There are innumerable other examples which have received far less notoriety. Charles E. Simon and Company is a Washington firm specializing in research related to investigations of the Security and Exchange Commission. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, Clark Abt Associates bills in the neighborhood of \$15 million a year for policy research for the federal government; Abt Associates' principal staff is all Ph.D.'s.

The White House under Nixon created the Office of Management and Budget, which was to have a staff that could control through its expertise the growth and performance of the federal bureaucracy. In 1972 Congress established a Congressional Budget Office and Budget Committees in both houses; they were to have experts who rivaled and could control those at OMB. Speaking at an annual meeting of the AFL-CIO's Committee on Political Education, House Speaker Tip O'Neill chided labor leaders for their refusal to recognize that the typical House member had become "younger, more widely educated, and independent."

Serious journals of opinion have come to reflect the presence of the new class. The editorial offices of *Commentary*, *The New York Review of Books*, *Atlantic*, and *Harper's* are outposts of the new class. *The Public Interest*, *Social Policy*, and *Foreign Affairs* are smaller-circulation journals exclusively devoted to communication with the new class. *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post* represent the significant new class newspapers. Increasingly these journals and newspapers present serious analysis of major policy issues. More and more their editorial intent is to appeal to different political camps within the new class.

One might ask, "But what do these idea people do that is analogous to laying a brick, selling a car, or cutting hair?" In brief, they read, write, and talk—as much as possible! Writing memos and reports is the major new class activity. This kind of document comes in many forms: it might be no longer than a one-page briefing for a boss about to make a public appearance, or it might be a 300-or-more-page report on the "equality of educational opportunity" (the so-called Coleman Re-

port). These reports, regardless of differences in length or literacy, all boil down to the following statement: "In view of the following facts, which have been analyzed, X or Y or Z are the suggested best courses of action." Memos and reports are written every day by millions of gainfully employed people who have been hired for no other reason.

When knowledge workers are not writing, they are reading or talking—a lot. In the world of the new class, knowledge is a valuable commodity, developed in highly competitive surroundings. Some reports are officially or unofficially secret, since, once published, knowledge becomes everyone's property. Idea people communicate with each other to find out how much more, or less, of the secret record the other knows.

IDEA PEOPLE work for a variety of employers. They are managers for federal agencies or for a market division of General Motors. They are scientists working on cancer research for the National Institute of Health, on weapons research for the Defense Department, or on product development for Dow Chemical. They are engineers with the Depart-



ment of Transportation, lawyers with the California Rural Legal Assistance Program, or doctors with the Massachusetts General Hospital. They are teachers and nurses and medical technicians. Do these various occupations have any characteristics in common? What are the reasons for lumping them together in a single category? Do knowledge workers belong to a class, their own class, which is separate from the owning or working classes?

There are three occupational characteristics which set the new class apart. First, the major new class employers dominate our lives. Second, by virtue of the work they perform, the new class enhances the power of organizations almost invariably. Third, the new class controls education and has made the acquisition of academic credentials the primary *rite de passage* into its midst.

1. The dominance of the organizational sector is irrefutable. Giant corporations and government bureaucracies exercise an overwhelming influence over the conduct of our lives. One dimension of organizational dominance is sheer size. Peter Drucker has pointed out that every company created by the break-up of the Standard Oil Trust in 1911 is bigger now than the original company; yet only three of the successor companies are major oil producers by today's standards.

Very little of consequence to modern society is produced outside of large organizations. Large school systems provide the elementary and secondary education of most children. The largest campuses control most higher education. Federal and

state agencies, and the judiciary, regulate the provision of educational services. Government, foundations, and corporations fund scientific research. Publishing houses and entertainment networks disseminate ideas.

Large corporations control the production and imposition of new technology. All technological advances change the society that existed the day before the innovation appeared. The automobile and television changed family life. Atomic research and space exploration redefined the globe. Biochemical and genetic research might impose the most revolutionary changes of all. These techniques are created within and administered by corporations.

2. Which organizations are most characteristic of this dominance? A partial list would include the major oil companies, ITT, General Electric and Westinghouse, Lockheed and Boeing, the Departments of Energy, Health, Education and Welfare, Defense, and Labor, NBC, CBS, ABC and the Public Broadcasting System, the major newspaper chains, 50 state governments, New York City, prestigious private universities like Harvard and massive state systems like California's.

These enterprises share one common operating dilemma: complexity. Their size alone involves them in a seemingly endless number of encounters with consumers, clients, competitors, and regulatory agencies. Their size also increases to almost incomprehensible levels the steps which must be taken, every day, to insure internal control. The new class is hired to manage this complexity.

The knowledge and planning needs of an organization are not met by one or two employees. The information must be gathered by pooling knowledge. The more important the decision is in terms of dollars invested, people affected, or opposition expected, the more the decision-maker is forced to rely upon information gathered by groups. The group produces the decision.

According to Galbraith, "When power is exercised by a group, not only does it pass into the organization, but it passes irrevocably." Specialized knowledge and group decision-making define the new class. They also show how the new class enhances the power of organizations. In today's circumstances, the only enduring opponent of an organization dominated by the new class is another organization dominated by the new class.

3. Academic credentials have become like capital: some people accumulate them to invest in the production of income. Being educated is an alienable quality, which means that a person can market it. Graduating from Harvard opens more doors than a degree from West Texas State. A degree in engineering provides more employment prospects than a degree in fine arts. When Marx spoke of the alienation of labor, he was describing how the worker was exploited. The new class *celebrates* its alienability.

This is a recent phenomenon. Not so long ago, higher education had little relationship to finding a job. A privileged few went to college, usually as a luxury. However, as more and more people secured college degrees, the more compelling became the economic necessity of education.

There is a debate about how much higher education contributes to lifetime earnings. One side maintains that education increases one's skills. The more highly educated have greater productivity and therefore command larger salaries. The other side argues that education has little impact on earnings, believing that family background and luck are the determinants.

This controversy is important only indirectly to understanding the relationship between the new class and higher education. Academic credentials are the gatekeepers to the new class, not the arbiters of success. Skill, family background, and luck may well separate successful from unsuccessful new class members, just as these same factors might make or break a small businessman.

In summary, organizational position and academic credentials define an arena of power. For example, the new class is comprised partly of those bureaucrats and legislative assistants who determine social security regulations. Quite distinct from these producers of organizational decisions are the consumers of social security benefits. The latter must adapt their lifestyles to regulations promulgated by the former. One is dependent; the other has power.

THE NEW class came into existence primarily in the 20th Century. Over the past 78 years, it has undergone three stages of development. In the first period, which ran from 1900 to 1945, knowledge workers appeared in private industry. These were the years during which managers gained the ascendancy in large corporations. Government was not yet a *major* new class employer. Economic recovery and World War II led the federal government to hire the more highly trained, but never in the numbers which were to be true after the war. The number of people graduating from college each year grew slowly, and generally the supply kept pace with the job openings requiring advanced degrees.

The nearly 25 years from the end of World War II through the inauguration of Richard Nixon were the second period of the new class. These were the boom years. The supply of and the demand for a college-educated work force increased dramatically. Private industry funded the new class through expenditures for research and development, through the creation of industries based upon new technologies, through a proliferation of internal administrative functions, and through the continued expansion of the managerial cadre.

Education accounted for the major increase in the public-sector new class. Government funded the new class also through the expansion of its role in managing the economy, through its large-scale entry into social programming, through its massive pursuit of research and development in arms and space, and through the increase in its regulatory functions.

With the inauguration of Richard Nixon, the new class entered a third historical era, which may continue through the first quarter of the 21st Century. In this period, the new class will contend with an economic problem and an ideological polarization.

The economic problem of the new class is one of oversupply. The immediate cause was the recession of the Nixon

years. The labor market's demand for college-trained workers dropped off tremendously, while the size of each year's graduating class remained at the previous high levels.

However, the more important cause of the oversupply problem was demographic: the postwar baby boom. This group of people, who were born in huge numbers in each year from 1946 to 1957, can be likened to a massive bulge passing through a long hose. The major increase in expenditures required to educate the baby boom is a telling example of how societal resources are stretched by this demographic aberration. As long as the demands made by the baby boom were for education, a generally expansionary economy was able to adjust successfully. Recessionary or slow-growth economies never will be able to satisfactorily provide new class jobs for all of the people who received advanced degrees over the past ten years. For example, we simply need fewer teachers today than we did in 1970.

The baby boom population is now from 20 to 32 years old. Assuming a retirement age of 65, we must wait until the year 2023 before those "babies" have passed through the labor force. While they are in it, they will experience intense competition for new class jobs. Their presence in the labor market in such huge numbers has intensified the competition experienced by older new class workers. And, the age groups immediately behind the baby boom also will be caught up in the problems of an oversupply.

Therefore, where the second new class period was expansionary and optimistic, the third period will be notable for its stress on the protection of job security. The unionization of teachers and other white-collar workers is the premier example of this trend. The DeFumis and Bakke challenges to the constitutionality of affirmative action are another response to the problem of oversupply. Minority recruitment programs appear to create competitive disadvantages for white males.

Throughout the remainder of this century, the new class also will contend with internal ideological conflict. The historian Marcus Cunliffe once identified two contrary ideologies among American intellectuals. The first he identified as "the clerisy," which meant intellectuals who defend the dominant values of their society. Opposed to the clerisy is the "avant-garde," those intellectuals who are alienated from those same values. From the Civil War to World War II, the avant-garde claimed the allegiance of most intellectuals. The targets of their antagonisms were many, but chief among them was the business class.

During the period of the new class ascendancy, the conflict between the clerisy and the avant-garde was muted. As the new class grew, giving intellectuals a sense of being useful and wanted, liberalism became the predominant political ideology of the idea people.

To be liberal was to steer a course between the avant-garde's rigid demands for independence from power and the clerisy's pedestrian defenses of the status quo. New class liberalism located itself to the left of the political spectrum, keeping the avant-garde as its conscience. However, liberals also wished to be effective and therefore needed to engage themselves with

power. They sought to be practical, to be reformist rather than revolutionary. The liberal new class believed that American legal and political institutions were democratic enough to legislate morality, safe in the expectation that the American people were decent enough to follow this lead eventually.

The balancing act between an avant-garde conscience and practical necessity proved too fragile to be a permanent ideology. Events of the past 10 to 15 years have burst asunder the liberal consensus of the new class. Once again we have the avant-garde and the clerisy.

The earlier avant-garde was bohemian and individualistic in its opposition to American society: it was disengaged. However, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the avant-garde became a mass movement which engaged in organized political expression of its opposition, primarily to the Vietnam war. Even more importantly, the avant-garde was allowed to become an employed adversary culture. The civil rights movement, the growth of legal public service careers, the ability of insurgents to win presidential primaries, the appearance of new regulatory agencies, the increased funds available to public interest foundations and lobbyists, the passage of far-reaching environmental protection legislation, and the mass election of independent congressmen in 1974 all opened up numerous career opportunities. The avant-garde was transformed into an employed adversary culture. Opposition to the business class continued, but it was now waged from within established centers of power.

The adversary culture's successes within universities and government jolted the established new class liberals. These liberals executed a retreat to the right as a strategy for regrouping: they are the neoconservatives. By assuming an intellectual defense of the business class, the neoconservatives have become the new class clerisy. During the 1960s and early 1970s, the adversary culture enjoyed the momentum. However, the neoconservatives have regained the initiative quite decisively.

The truest measure of their rising fortunes is money, which they now have in abundance. Big business has caught the "hire our own intellectuals" fever and, of course, can outspend everyone when the spirit moves them. The mood of the country is cautious. The state of the economy requires retrenchment. Irving Kristol and friends are constructing the first seriously sophisticated conservative political philosophy since Alexander Hamilton and the *Federalist Papers*. It is catching on.

And yet, the neoconservative agenda is far from accomplished. The adversary culture has tenured positions in the universities and protected civil service jobs in government. The McGovern and Carter forces have spread throughout the Democratic party. These two camps make up with a shared neo-populism what they lack in shared liberal orthodoxy. To make matters worse, Jerry Brown and his California Zen-Jesuit troupe lie waiting in the wings for 1980. Some neoconservatives apparently have ceded the Democratic party to the adversary culture. Irving Kristol already has proffered advice to G.O.P. Congressman Jack Kemp's presidential bid. A good politician, Kemp nonetheless is a Reagan Republican.

THE NEOCONSERVATIVES and the adversary culture are devoted to the belief that the "other side" constitutes a pernicious class. They themselves, of course, are free of such entanglements. No amount of acrimony should obscure the fact that both sides are factions of a single economic class. Each side may have portrayed accurately the faults of the other—but that would not dissolve their common class bonds. In reality, each side wishes to write itself out of its class situation. Why?

One purpose serves the struggle for leadership and position within the new class. University professorships, editorial offices, and business or government consultants are as comfortable as they are lucrative. The paths to these elite positions, and to the followings these positions command, are strewn with hurdles put there by this conflict between the left and the right. In the era of the new class, intellectuals have some considerable power to set, independently, the agenda of ideas and issues to which the bosses and money-bags respond. With two dominant factions actively pursuing power and position, discrediting the other side becomes an obvious strategy.

The new class enlarges the elite strata of American society and in no immediate way threatens the wealthy upper class or the political or corporate baronies. However, the new class does threaten further the life circumstances of the non-elite sectors of society—those who are dependent upon the largesse of an institutionalized society. The non-elite sector includes unionized and non-unionized manufacturing workers whose jobs are affected by the new class's persistent restructuring of the productive process. They are the elderly and the poor living in older sections of central cities, lacking the economic resources to withstand an upper middle class invasion of their neighborhoods. They are black and third-world populations which are not materially affected by the new class furor over affirmative action: they are these same communities which are left behind by those few who do benefit from affirmative action.

To define the new class exclusively in terms of values or political allegiances, rather than shared economic conditions, obfuscates our self-interests. By viewing itself simply as representative of society's underdogs and as conscience of the nation, the avant-garde evades the possibility that many of its favored causes may be more self-serving than widely beneficial. By attacking the avant-garde element within the new class as "adversarial," elitist and neglectful of the needs of most Americans, the clerisy forecloses questions about its own stake in defending the status quo. As long as both factions deny their common new class roots, both need not question their successes, their careerism, their scramble for an appropriation of scarce economic and ideological resources.

The future efficacy of politics in America might well depend upon the candor of the new class—in effect, upon our personal honesty. Discussion about the new class has only begun. The first step should be to rule out subterfuge, conscious or unconscious, on the part of the clerisy, on the part of the avant-garde, about our common class interests and our internal rivalries.

SCENES

BY STEPHEN DARST

MY MOTHER'S MOTHER and father, after being estranged for 28 years, died in St. Louis on the same day in the winter of 1936. My grandfather had walked off one day in 1908 when my mother was eight years old. She had watched from the window of a train in the Atlanta railroad station while her mother and father paced back and forth beside the train. She could not hear a word, but she was familiar with their arguments from the times he came home late, and she was awakened by raised voices.

In St. Louis my mother was placed in boarding school at the Visitation Convent, and she remained there, except for summers, until graduation in 1918 while her mother supported them by traveling about the United States and Canada organizing concerts. The convent must have been derangingly lonely for a young girl. We sometimes visited there on Sundays when we were growing up, and while my mother talked to the old nuns in the cloister through a grate my brothers and sisters and I would sit silently on hard wooden chairs and watch the afternoons grow long on the highly waxed floors of the corridors and listen to the bells calling the nuns.

My grandfather had been raised a Catholic, but he remarried somewhere along the line. My grandmother, a convert from the Episcopal Church at the time of her wedding, never did. No one in his family had close ties with my grandfather after 1908. When he was dying my mother visited him once in the hospital, their first meeting since the Atlanta station. She brought along my brother, Ed, thinking her father would like to see his grandson.

"You should have brought along one of your girls," he said. "I'd rather see a pretty girl."

My grandmother was in another hospital across town in South St. Louis. When my mother visited her later, my grandmother somehow knew that George Donovan was dying although my mother did not tell her. After the priest came in the evening to administer the Last Sacraments, she told my mother, "I'm damned if I'm going to die and make an honest man of George Donovan."

Those were her last words. When my grandfather's brother Leo called on my mother at home later to tell her that her father had died a few definitive hours before her mother, my mother said, "As far as I am concerned my father died when I was eight years old."

The arrangements were as simple as if he had been executed. He was buried the day after my grandmother in the Donovan plot in Calvary Cemetery with only the one brother

representing the family. It was as if George Donovan were just coming home from one of his escapades and had been slipped soundlessly in beside his sleeping wife, the only wife in the eyes of the church. My mother did not go to the wake or to the church or to the cemetery.

I HEARD all this by the time I reached the age my mother had been the day her father left. The break-up of her home was the central fact of her life, and it became important in the lives of my brother and sisters and me. My sisters, who understood the feminine mind far better than I, thought the memory of the Atlanta railroad station and the unmanageable emotions it raised gave our mother her headlong romanticism and her weakness for the dramatic scene.

Sometimes those scenes were almost predictable because of familiar elements, elements that resonated with unhappy memories from her brief home life. Drinking was one such element. On nights when my father stopped for a few drinks on the way home, he enjoyed declaiming Vergil when he belatedly reached the dinner table. He knew much of the "Aeneid" by heart.

Once he got no further than "Arma virumque cano" when my mother lifted a stack of china, crashed the plates down on the floor and went off to drive the roads. He did not say a word. Or, rather, he did not say a word in English.

"... Troiae qui primus," he went on, "ab oris Italiam fato. . . ."

Her fury was doubly irrational because she herself drank a highball or two in the study with my father before dinner. She drank a little less than he did, but not as well. She tended to straighten people out with "frank" observations that no one much wanted to hear. My father's side of the family all drank well. They tended to tell funny stories, they sang a little, and from time to time they would "build up" or "freshen" their drinks. They never had another drink, they simply built up or freshened the one they had and it was easy to imagine that there

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had indeed been only that single drink in the whole history of my father's family, a drink periodically requiring a little building up, freshening, serving down through the generations the apparently unslakable family thirst.

Because of her father my mother did not like people who drank heavily. She really hated and feared drinking, and she instilled that fear in each of her children. Not that we didn't drink, we did, all six of us, but we drank something like her, I'm afraid, and like her father perhaps, rather than in the relaxed declamatory way of our own father. I never saw my mother's father, never saw a picture of him, although I am said to resemble him, but every time I have stepped up to a bar anywhere he is there, along with the others from my father's side, uncles and cousins, some now dead, some still very much alive, wonderful drinking companions, the best of men, always accompanied, though, by that ghost at the feast, the grandfather who walked off one day.

"You're rotten spoiled, just like your grandfather," my mother would say when I forgot to do my chores or came home with a bad report card. There was a certain dash to that—I was delighted to be thought of as rotten spoiled rather than careless or dumb, but I knew the description did not really fit. The fifth in a family of six children has to get out and hustle with far more ingenuity than I ever possessed in order to become rotten spoiled. "He was handsome too—handsome and witty and charming and popular with everyone—men and women." A dying fall after that last word. "And that was his weakness."

This sermon invariably led to talk of my immortal soul.

"If you ever leave the Catholic Church," she would warn me, "I will come back from the grave to haunt you."

In all honesty, it was the furthest thing from my mind. I had just celebrated a festive First Communion, had barely joined the church really, and I thought it was a fine thing, grand and dramatic and warm. I had no intention of ever leaving it. But by the time I was nine years old I was full of implacable resolutions, against drinking and loose women and apostasy, temptations which did not exist for me except in my firm renunciation of them. And somehow the very absence of genuine sinful allure added to their mystery. Homes wrecked, eternal salvation out the window—for what? A foul-smelling liquid? Cold apostasy which could amount to little more than bravado? Love of women—creatures as commonplace as my sisters? I shuddered at the thought of my grandfather, at his light-hearted evil.

WHEN YOU suspect some truly disastrous gene might put in an appearance through your children at any moment, it is probably only natural to be on your guard. My mother was extraordinarily strict and watchful with all of us. With the track record of that gene always in mind, her worst scenes were triggered by disappearances, even momentary disappearances. In our family the children were expected to do a lot of sitting around waiting, and it never occurred to me until years later what it was that we were waiting for. I believe she thought of us as the younger brothers and sisters whose company she

had been deprived of through the family breakup. She kept us sitting around at night and on weekends simply, I think, to be able to come around periodically to count us.

One spring Saturday after a few hours of baseball in the park I was walking back home with friends when a squad car, siren screaming, red light flashing, intercepted me a block from the house.

"Richard Slater?" the cop behind the wheel growled. "Get in."

I was extremely embarrassed. Embarrassment was an emotion never far from the surface when I was growing up, an emotion exactly as powerful as love, because it was its indivisible adjunct. When the squad car deposited me at our house my mother ran down the walk crying, "We thought you had been kidnapped. You could have been killed. We were frantic."

My father said something sharp but that was just going through the motions. My brothers and sisters thought it was all extremely funny. Until they went through the same thing, and they all did. When Carol fell asleep on the tile of the third floor bathroom she woke to see a fireman climbing in the window to save her. My mother sent the State Police through the wilderness one midnight to find Ed peacefully camping by an Ozark river. A pleasant summer afternoon's sail on Chesapeake Bay was interrupted for Barbara and a boy friend when an aircraft carrier drew alongside to ask if they were the boat in distress.

I think my mother's penchant for ringing in officialdom at the first sign of trouble had something to do with the uniforms. Uniforms made the scenes doubly embarrassing for us because doubly melodramatic, exactly the point as far as she was concerned, with the uniforms serving as costumes.

Through the use of costumes—the clothes that she insisted you wear could not be described as anything other than costumes—she was able to extend her capacity for the creation of scenes virtually geometrically. When you sallied forth from the house for your first formal dance dressed in your grandfather's (the other one, her father having walked off that day, thank God, with all his clothes on his back) cape or ill-fitting genuine beaver top hat and seedy dinner jacket, you felt wretchedly clownish. Ed and I got off relatively easy at that. After all, there were only so many moldering morning coats in that attic, and when they and the decrepit dinner jackets and capes and muskrat greatcoats were gone, that was it. She didn't fancy herself a cloak-and-suiter. She did, however, have delusions of couturiership, and the attic supply of old boas and laces and mildewing ribbons was endless. An appearance by any of my sisters at the humblest picnic was preceded by days of lettings-out and tuckings-in and hem-droppings before that full-length mirror in the upstairs sitting room, with my mother snapping, "Hold still" through a mouthful of pins.

HER DRAMATIC powers were only seen at their best in the presence of death, though. She was at her best at wakes. At the funeral of a great aunt emotions would play across her face that would have done credit to Mater Dolorosa at Gol-

gotha. And then in the car on the way home from the cemetery she would make some grandly dismissive remark about the deceased that did not jibe at all with her largely professed sorrow. At wakes I was always tongue-tied with grief, embarrassment and simply not knowing what to say, but she came into her own. The ineffable sadness of her face spoke volumes, but she had good lines too. One I heard her give too many times to count, but one that never failed to strike just the right note, was saved for the widow. Taking the widow's hands in her own, looking the poor woman in the eye, she would quietly intone, "Alphonse never hurt a soul in all his life." It never failed to bring down the house.

On my mother's side of the family, they tended to die rather young. She had always expected to die before my father whose family was filled with great uncles and grandfathers who had lived into their nineties. My father's death at sixty-nine devastated and surprised her. She outlived him by fifteen years, and I think she spent most of that time preparing for her own funeral. When she died we found complete instructions in an envelope. The envelope had been glued and reopened and sealed and unsealed and stapled shut and unstapled a half-dozen times as if she had been unable to allow even the instructions for her burial to remain at rest.

For thirty years the family had been buried from Bailey's Funeral Home, and she instructed us ("I would not consider myself dead unless. . .") to hold the wake there, although it was in a deteriorating section of the city and people no longer liked to go down there at night.

Barbara and I were the only ones still living in St. Louis. The others were scattered as far as California. She died at eight in the morning, and it was six that evening before everyone reached the undertakers to work out the funeral arrangements. Ed had come from Denver where he had been living for twenty years. He had had his drink freshened a few times on the flight, and when he arrived at Bailey's he was fairly well along. When everyone had assembled, we held a family conference in a small room off the parlors.

Somewhere along the line she had become fascinated with the idea of giving her body to medical science. I had heard her mention the notion from time to time, but I had paid no attention. But she pursued the idea and, according to her instructions, her body was promised to the university medical school. Papers had been signed. And then other papers had been signed. Although she had willed her entire body to the medical school, she had also willed her eyes to the eye bank and her kidneys to the kidney bank.

"Oh, for God's sake," Carol cried. "Why couldn't she just have a funeral like everyone else?"

"The body bank," Barbara said, "the kidney bank. The cornea bank. What didn't she think of?"

In a sense—hell, in every sense—she was overdrawn at the bank. Being overdrawn in her checking account had been an everyday occurrence with her, one which had driven my father crazy. It is a hard thing to admit, but it was a cold fact that for the next few minutes we were all, all of the family from the

baby (Carol, age forty-two, with six children of her own, no husband, he having left her for a twenty-year-old bimbo) to the oldest, Barbara (staring with disbelief at the papers she held in her hands), and including Ed and Ann and Patricia and myself, we were all sore as hell at her, at our own mother, dead not twelve hours.

"Why can't we just do things like other people?" Carol asked, and she began to cry. Ed walked resolutely, if a trifle unsteadily, over to Barbara and snatched the instructions from her hand.

"I think this matter can be handled quite nicely if the girls will just step aside," he said. A moment later he was dialing the phone out in the hall. Everyone knew what he was going to do, make a scene with the medical school and the body banks, telling them that they would get his mother's body only over his own dead body. Some ringing statement. The meeting broke up. We passed him in the hall where he was searching for the night number for the university in a phone book.

The next day and through the evening the family and friends came. Several of her friends showed up in black coats and solemnly handed over cards turned up at the edges, exactly as she would have done, and I had the uneasy feeling she was just offstage, her mouth full of pins, dressing people for her own wake.

I HAVE always sympathized with non-Catholics at Catholic funerals, with their desire to honor the memory of the dead friend without being swallowed up even momentarily by Rome and its mysteries. And I sympathize even more now that I have ceased going to Mass, and the new Mass is no longer the Mass I grew up with. Because funerals are now almost the only Masses I attend, they have become not only memorials to the dead but also memorials to Mass itself, requiem for Requiems.

I remembered my mother's words about coming back from the grave to haunt me if I ever fell away from the church, and for the first time I realized that I was now a fallen-away Catholic. And I no sooner recognized my apostasy than I lapsed from it—mourners were slipping from their pews to move up for Communion, and I rose to rejoin the faithful.

At the cemetery the service was reassuringly familiar.

"... may the angels lead you into paradise;

May the martyrs come to welcome you

And take you to the holy city,

The new and eternal Jerusalem."

We left her in the grave beside her husband, our father. Nearby was the Donovan family plot where her own mother and father lay, the father who died not as my mother had always said in 1908 in Atlanta when he walked off from his wife and eight-year-old daughter, and not, as the headstone said, in 1936, the same day as her mother, but that very day, the same day as his daughter, who refused to let his damned rotten-spoiled charming good-for-nothing soul be at peace, but tormented his soul awake, kept it without peace, through hatred and crushed love and desperate romanticism, as long as she drew breath.

Screen

CALIFORNIA SOUR

HUMANITY SIMONIZED AND TRAVOLTED

G OING to a Neil Simon comedy is a little like watching God think. Everyone Simon imagines belongs in Paradise, too. His characters are the prototypes for a million imperfect copies whom we all know in real life. They are samples of Creation, and like so many of the characters one meets in the Book of Genesis, they lack fine detail in the way that the work of someone used to thinking in generalities always does. The Beverly Hills Hotel, which is the setting for Simon's new comedy, *California Suite*, is an apt version of Paradise. Yet it is interesting to see how Simon peoples the place. It turns out that all men are not equal in the sight of Simon, and women are especially unequal. (In all fairness to Simon, though, it must be admitted that God has also been accused lately of not being an Equal Opportunity employer.)

In *California Suite* the ethnics provide the broad humor—the stuff for the pit, the slapstick—while the WASPs do drawing-room comedy, the material aimed at the loges, the repartee. Thus Jane Fonda and Alan Alda, a divorced couple meeting again for the first time in years, get to spend all their time back-chatting each other, as do Michael Caine and Maggie Smith, who plays a British actress attending the Oscars with her husband. But Bill Cosby and Richard Pryor, as a couple of black doctors on vacation with their wives, have sight gags for the most part. They have to get physical to get laughs, just as Jewish businessman Walter Matthau does when he needs to wrestle a drunk hooker around his suite so his wife, Elaine May, won't discover her.

There are certain foibles of American life that fascinate Simon, but when he is dealing with ethnic groups he seems to have a policy of only one foible to a customer. In *California Suite*, if you're a black man, you're over-competitive. That's your whole identity. Or if you're a Jewish mother, you're over-indulgent with your husband. It's a policy that makes the characters very one-dimensional. The WASPs, by contrast, are two-dimensional, especially women like Hanna (Jane Fonda), who is a magazine editor, and Dianah Barry (Maggie Smith), the movie star. They are both competitive and caring. They internalize foibles as conflict. Along with their screen-writer or antique-dealer husbands, these women are more real to Simon than upwardly mobile blacks and middle-class Jews. Simon may write for the latter, but he hangs out with the former. Their emotional traumas, though funny, need to be taken more seriously, and as characters they show us more of Simon's actual feelings about people.

The provocative result is that we see the men as very laid-back (it's the appropriate California term), and very calm, very much at peace with themselves, and very supportive of

the women. The women, by contrast, are neurotic, driven, suspicious and domineering. They are the characters with whom Simon is most preoccupied, clearly, and just as clearly the ones he needs some defense mechanisms against. These heroines are his defense mechanisms against a certain sort of woman he no doubt meets all the time—meets more and more—in his own life. Whereas Simon is at ease with the homosexuality of the character played by Michael Caine, Sidney, he seems definitely on edge with the mere independence of Hannah. Her aggressive pursuit of a career makes it impossible for her ex-husband to live with her. But Sidney's flirtations with other men are something his wife Dianah just has to tolerate, since Simon himself does. It is Hannah who is the threat to the institution of marriage, not Sidney.

California Suite might be thought of as a movie that runs the gambit from Jane Fonda's role in the first of the film's four stories to Elaine May's role in the last one. May plays a woman who hangs on to her husband by overlooking his infidelity. Fonda plays a woman who loses her daughter by being a success. (The daughter has run away to California, and Daddy.) As in most Neil Simon plays, you pay your money and you take your choice. Simon himself is obviously more at home with the Elaine May character, perhaps because she's just the sort of woman he never has to his home anymore.

A telltale sign of Simon's uncertainty with Hannah or Dianah is to be heard in a phoniness that their lines sometimes have. As her plane lands in L.A., for instance, Dianah says to Sidney, "Just think, nine years at the Old Vic, a dozen productions of Shakespeare, and now I may receive an award for a silly little comedy." As exposition the line is awkward enough, but as sentiment it's even clumsier. It makes Dianah seem the sort of person who says things too loudly in the hope that strangers will overhear and envy her—the sort who goes around overstating her case all the time. Some of Hannah's lines are equally tinny, as when she tells her ex-, in what is intended (mistakenly) as one of her story's poignant moments, that her current boyfriend has "the second best mind I've met in this country since Adlai Stevenson." In fairness to Simon, though, he only bungles this badly once in a while. Jane

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Wagner, the writer-director of *Moment by Moment*, does it consistently, relentlessly, throughout her whole movie.

At the bleeding, throbbing heart of Wagner's picture is a May-September love story about Trisha (Lily Tomlin), a Beverly Hills matron who is disaffected with her marriage, and "Strip" (John Travolta), a teenage runaway who picks her up. Their relationship has just about every cliché in it known to Hollywood. The morning after she begins sleeping with him, she finds him outside with a stray puppy he's adopted, as a companion for one she owns. If that dog had known what he was getting into, he'd have toughed it out with the ASPCA. Then there's the scene where "Strip" and Trisha have a moment of truth in her California hot tub—*By Love Possessed* played on a porn-flick set. They even build a sand castle and throw bottles with messages in them into the ocean.

Whether Travolta has any acting talent is still impossible to tell. He plays this role just the way he did the ones in *Saturday Night Fever* and *Grease*—as a kind of man-child, cooing with heavy-lidded Italian sexiness half the time, and whining adolescently the rest. Lily Tomlin, on the other hand, is clearly capable of acting, though not in a turkey like this. Here there are only four things she can do, acting not being among them. She pants. She sighs. *She squeaks*. And she klinks, from all the chunky silver jewelry she wears.

Although Wagner was unable to give the performances of Tomlin and Travolta any direction, the weakness of *Moment by Moment* may not be entirely her fault. There are certain things about this film which mark it as the work of Robert Stigwood, who also produced *Saturday Night Fever* and *Grease*. The only thing in this flick that feels heavier than Travolta's eyelids is Stigwood's hand on the tiller. Producers tend to be Johnny One-Notes. Whatever once worked for them they do over and over, which may be the reason we get a reprise here of Travolta's pavement-pounding opening to *Saturday Night Fever*. As Trisha hunts for "Strip" in L.A. one night, a low, tracking camera on her feet is accompanied by disco sounds.

Originally Wagner's script may not have been so soft and fluffy as it seems now. Vestigial signs of something with more shape to it appear at certain moments, as when Trisha's relationship with "Strip" ends the way it began, during a phone call from her husband. And there are one or two nicely ambiguous touches. Like Trisha, we don't trust "Strip" at first. When Wagner at one point shows him doubled up with pain in his room, because she gives us no context for this scene first she makes it easy for us to believe he must be a junky going through "cold turkey." When it turns out that what we saw was grief and fear over the killing of a friend, we have to go through the same change of attitude toward him as Trisha. But aside from occasional glimpses of Wagner's intentions like this, the film shows us little. It suffers from the same failing as *Saturday Night Fever*. It knows something about how people hustle (or Hustle) each other, but nothing about genuine feeling. Like the first twenty minutes of *Saturday Night Fever*, the first twenty minutes of this film, when Strip is trying to pick up Trisha and getting nowhere, are ironic and likable. But as soon

as she gives in, the movie caves in. If *Moment by Moment* is what the people who made it think love is like, it's no wonder the only thing that comes off in their picture is a little aggravation, bitterness and disappointment at the beginning. After that, moment by moment was the only way I could get through this movie.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

Television

NOW, MORAL ISSUES

HOMOSEXUALITY AS CHIC MALADY, ETC.

JOHN MORLEY once wrote that "those who treat politics and morality apart will never understand the one or the other." Television has usually preferred to ignore both, and has in fact often used the clever expedient of combining the two on the same untouchable coin. Morality, or any consensus about it, is a kind of political decision, so they believe, and therefore beyond the scope of the networks. In the past, television preferred to be moralistic in matters about which there isn't much argument—lying, cheating, robbery—and to avoid complex issues—homosexuality, racism—that may hinge on morals.

It is worth noting that, while moral controversies have become a fair subject for treatment, politics remains largely under censure. The networks have always recoiled from it as though they were afraid of contamination. Political advertisements are usually sandwiched between so many official disclaimers and protests of indifference that the viewer might imagine they were somehow imposed on the station, rather than bought from it, and at a very substantial price. The irony is that moral controversies have much greater implications than political campaigns, and it is probable that television, in dealing with moral complexities, does not quite know what it has gotten into.

It is interesting, now that the networks have begun to look at certain moral debates, and demand a certain maturity of their audience, how times have changed. With a convert's bigotry, television has rushed into controversy with all the fervor and righteousness that moral trendiness commands. The networks seem to operate on the premise that so long as points of view are loud and ubiquitous, and have acquired a certain popular appeal, they can be examined from their own absolute vantage point.

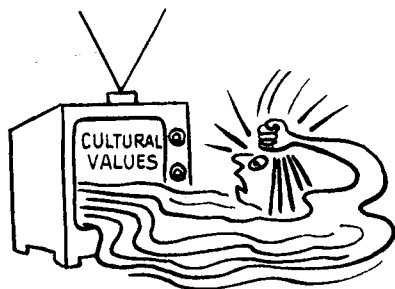
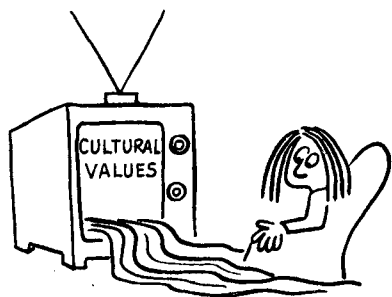
Homosexuality is an example. Needless to say, in all media, it has gone from being the Love That Dare Not Speak Its Name to the Lifestyle That Can't Keep Its Mouth Shut. All attitudes about it—from Anita Bryant leftward—have had their day in court, or the studio, and television has grown to be obviously titillated by the administration of entertainment shock. "You know, I happen to be gay," has become an intermission line

with which we are wearily familiar. What is curious is that the networks seem to believe that so long as an attitude is prominent and habitual, it acquires, at least by repetition, a kind of respectability. In the marketplace of ideas it looks to the opinion that has employed the more sophisticated promotional techniques and, in the realm of ratings, come to assume that might makes right—which, in many instances, it does. Naturally, the partisans of homosexuality have been rather smarter about these things than their fundamentalist adversaries, and so television has taken its cue.

As with race, decades of sexual bigotry are being atoned for by an abundance of analysis, and uncritical analysis at that. So far as television is concerned, homosexuality has supplanted hepatitis as the chic malady. Few situation comedies have been immune from the introduction of a lovable homosexual whose demeanor and state of mind are meant to seem perfectly natural. Indeed, the leader of the ratings, "Three's Company" (ABC), partly revolves around a foolish heterosexual landlord's inability to come to mature grips with an allegedly homosexual tenant.

Not long ago ABC broadcast an archetypal dramatic treatment of the subject. Entitled "A Question of Love" it was the story of a lesbian and her courtroom battle to keep custody of her son, who was growing up in a household shared with Mother and her (lesbian) lover. In all instances, the characters were out of Central Casting, the sort of propaganda we casually associate with repressiveness. The two lesbians were soft, vulnerable creatures; the ex-husband was a Bible-reading child-molester; the husband's lawyer was a fat redneck; the lesbian's lawyer was a slick, tough public interest practitioner (female) with stylish clothes and a frizzy permanent. Naturally, the child was taken away, and we were left once again with the sad spectacle of society imposing its principles on people who know better. One might assume from the televised spectacle that morality doesn't represent experience so much as caprice, and that the future is nothing but a lonely battle against intolerance.

Well, it is not so simple as



COMING: Saul Maloff writes on the criticism of Philip Rahv and Wilfrid Sheed. 'Critics' Choices' for Religious Book Week. And Flannery O'Connor's 'Letters.'

that, and perhaps television ought to think twice before going much further on the commercial message bandwagon. For me, the clearest example of morality gone awry is a CBS program called "The White Shadow," which debuted at midseason. The story of a white basketball coach at a predominantly black high school, it contains in its modest format nearly every current TV platitude about social behavior. The coach, to begin with, is an ex-Professional Athlete, which gives him the patina of one whose success on the playing field, or in this instance the court, can be transferred with slight adaptation to life itself. This is a favorite theme of television: moral redemption through athletics. Most evidence in the real world belies it, but television goes on anyway. The coach has rejected all offers to make more money or take a more glamorous job. Of course, to do so would end the show, but it is meant to demonstrate that Ambition nearly always grows Blind (look at John Dean) and that a man who has been a Professional Athlete knows the value of everything and the price of nothing. Furthermore as we have learned, success in its usual form is a glittering illusion, particularly when it involves compromise—and it nearly always does.

The players are all juvenile delinquents, and in the fashion of "Welcome Back, Kotter" (ABC) they have turned juvenile delinquency on its head. It used to be regarded as a social problem; now it is a good way to raise a laugh, and morally defensible at that. Much of "The White Shadow," as with "Kotter," is given over to setting up stuffed shirts for their well-deserved pratfalls. This, of course, is justice of a sort. It serves to show that conventional morality is a lot of nonsense, really, and it takes society's outcasts (homosexuals, hoodlums, etc.) to put the matter into perspective.

That, indeed, is how far television has been willing to go to illustrate its moral points. It has sought at the same time to take a stand and to please the galleries, always a dangerous course. And in so doing it has chosen to embrace the worst elements of moral argument: the opinions that will delight those circles least likely to understand moral complexity. It has become, in an odd way, a victim of the sixties. On Madison Avenue, in trendy cocktail chatter, in the precincts where chicness and principles sometimes join forces in unholy alliance, the networks are being cheered, for they have learned to pander by methods they used to reserve for athletic events and "The Andy Griffith Show." Television has turned from cowardice to a reckless advocacy, and periodically congratulates itself that with its awesome persuasive power it can now do well by doing good. Unfortunately, where moral controversy is concerned, the problem is bigger than the networks' capacity to understand it.

PHILIP TERZIAN

16 February 1979: 83

'Political idiot but a saint'

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM

ONE OF the more distinguished Catholic journals in Europe (but, alas, little known on this side of the Atlantic) is the Florentine quarterly *Testimonianze*. Begun as a journal of opinion and theological reflection by some Florentine Catholic intellectuals who were increasingly disenchanted by the state of the Christian Democratic party and the more "official" sources of Catholic thought, *Testimonianze* is now a quarter of a century old. Its issues have been blessedly free from that clerico-curial language which suffocates the articles of so many Italian religious journals—*Civiltà Cattolica* comes immediately to mind—although it has tended in the past years to become a bit lumpy with neo-marxist catchwords. Its editorial orientation has become increasingly leftist over the years (it is almost a barometer of such a trend in Italian Catholic intellectual life) and can be safely categorized as the most responsible voice of the Christian Left in Italy today. Its most distinguished contributor Father Ernesto Balducci (whom I briefly profiled in these pages in 1972: "Theology Italian Style," March 24, 1972) is a model of good sense, evangelical fervor and philosophical sophistication. Over the years I have been nurtured by its in-depth articles of religious questions in Italy and Europe; its careful analyses of such thinkers as Antonio Gramsci; its fine research on "popular" religion (a topic which increasingly attracts the attention of liberation theologians); its persuasive understanding of political theology—a slant which has made me more sympathetic to a style of theology for which I have little connatural taste.

This encomium to *Testimonianze* is

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presented because we are doubly in its debt for publishing (in its April/July, 1978 issue) a hefty three-hundred-page issue totally dedicated to the memory of the late Professor Giorgio La Pira, the mayor of the city of Florence from 1951 to 1964. There are over twenty articles on La Pira's many-faceted career as a law professor, political figure, ambassador without portfolio in the cause of peace and, above all else, as a man of contemplation, solitude, poverty and heroic generosity. The issue concludes with a bibliography of over two hundred items that came from La Pira's own pen and a shorter bibliography of works about him. (The editorial offices of *Testimonianze* are at Via Gino Caponi, 36. Florence, Italy 50121; annual subscriptions to the U.S.A. are L. 17,000. Individual back issues may be purchased for L. 3,000.)

When I was living in Florence in the early Seventies I had many discussions about La Pira with friends and, on occasion, would see him on the streets of Florence hurrying along in his inevitably baggy light-colored suits. I count it among the sadder decisions of my life not to have introduced myself and spoken with him. I once asked a Florentine friend—a fiercely anti-clerical middle-class conservative—what he thought of La Pira. "*Come politico era un cretino, ma anche un santo*," was his decisive reply. A political idiot but a saint. Actually, that was not a bad description since it was said of La Pira frequently, by people who knew much more about politics than my friend, that he was a hopeless utopian, a notoriously indifferent administrator, but a person of genuinely profound spirituality. Such types are often dismissed by their enemies as "fools" but even their friends find them to be signs of contradiction. After all, what does one make of a man who:

(a) was a conservative Thomist

theological thinker but attacked by the Fascist press for shuffling "A Masonic, liberal and Christian deck while mixing up St. Thomas and political liberalism" and then having his journal shut down by the same Fascists because of the "need to ration paper,"

(b) corresponded with Nikita Khrushchev during the height of the Cold War with suggestions about pruning the "Socialist oak" of its "atheistic deadwood" and arguing, in the same letter, that the true Marx was rooted in the prophet Isaiah and the atheism of Marx was a superficial carryover from bourgeois prejudices which Marx inherited from the French Revolution,

(c) was conservative enough to tell a dissident parish which was at odds with the Cardinal Archbishop of Florence that "*ubi episcopus, ibi ecclesia*" while, on another occasion, telling the Apostolic Delegate in Egypt that the fervent public prayers of Moslems in Cairo was proof that they need no Baptism. You could just send a priest up into the nearest minaret, La Pira told the scandalized prelate,

(d) dispensed food, clothes, medicines and sermons every day while he was mayor of Florence and, long before the pop asceticism of Jerry Brown, lived in monastic simplicity (for a bit he actually lived in a Dominican friary); attended Mass daily; recited the breviary; and lived as a celibate. He seemed to keep no personal possessions even to the extent of giving away his personal library in order to remain unencumbered with worldly goods,

(e) carried on a vast—and yet unpublished—correspondence with three popes (Pius XII, John XXIII, and Paul VI) that was influential at the highest level of Vatican policy. It has been suggested, for example, that La Pira may have been the catalyst for the exchange of letters between Khrushchev and Pope John XXIII which ended in the

precedent-setting visit of the Premier's son-in-law to the Vatican. Despite this entrée to papal confidence many high-placed clerics in the Vatican thought he was unbalanced or downright dangerous.

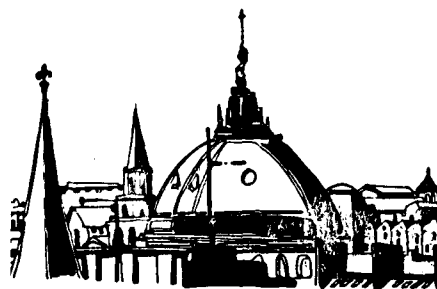
ONE COULD multiply these paradoxes *in extenso* but that might leave the impression that La Pira was merely quixotic. Such is not the case. La Pira began his public career as an esteemed academic. He gained his degree in the law and was appointed to the Faculty of Jurisprudence in Florence in the early thirties. His first publications were scholarly articles on various arcane points of the history of Roman law. Even in this early period La Pira, like many Catholic intellectuals of the time, was strongly drawn to the renewed scholasticism of the time. He made a deep study of St. Thomas and was widely read in the writings of Maritain and well versed in the personalism of Emmanuel Mounier. He had close contacts with leading young Catholics in Italy some of whom, like the late Aldo Moro, would play a leading role in the rise of the Christian Democrats in the postwar period. At the surface, then, La Pira's intellectual and spiritual formation was not dissimilar to that of many other Catholic intellectuals of the time; one thinks immediately of Alcide de Gasperi in Italy and Konrad Adenauer in Germany.

La Pira participated in Christian Democratic politics after the war and was one of those who worked on the drafting of the proposed Italian Constitution after the Italian people voted in a republic in 1946. It was inevitable that he would play some role in the public life of the Christian Democratic Party so it came as no surprise that he headed the DC municipal slate in 1957 and was elected to the office of mayor. La Pira served through three administrations until the Communists took the majority of the votes in 1964. La Pira's incumbency was quite controversial especially during the extreme cold war years of the late Fifties. His vigorous intervention on behalf of workers who had been laid off at certain large factories was much resented. La Pira openly sympathized with the workers; he participated at Masses with them

and gave open approval to their demonstrations and sit-ins. He soon gained the sobriquet of the "Red Mayor" from certain rightist elements in his own party.

This impression of radicalism was reinforced by La Pira's expropriation of unused buildings, properties and villas to provide worker housing. La Pira simply answered such charges of radicalism with the serene observation that a roof over one's head is a basic and inalienable right. La Pira also held himself aloof from the rigid demands of Luigi Gedda's *Azione Cattolica* with its attendant militant anti-Communist crusade (which had the blessing and less than covert support of Pius XII). He personally dispensed the city's largesse to the poor; it was said of La Pira that he knew by name every bum at the city shelter. His close friendship with the saintly Cardinal della Costa of Florence and, more dangerously, Cardinal Lercaro of Bologna, gave credence to the idea that he was a "progressive."

La Pira was hardly a progressive in the theological sense. Even after the Second



Vatican Council he had strong reservations about the "new theology" while the rapid liturgical changes in the church simply bemused him. La Pira had a strong sense of the church, as a visible and structured entity, that exerted its presence in the world and its mystical power over the course of history. In that sense, as he liked to say, he was a materialist. He wanted the presence of the church as a countersign to the ills of the world. He felt this most keenly in the post-atomic period. For La Pira, the introduction of atomic weaponry created an absolutely new condition into the world: for the first time in human history it was possible for humanity to bring about the Apocalypse by an act of the will. Deeply influenced by the peace writings of Thomas Merton, La Pira was

convinced absolutely that the most urgent large task of the Christian was to lessen the possibility of atomic war. The armed tension between the East and the West was an unthinkable state of affairs; such a stand-off demanded the building of bridges between the two armed camps.

Beyond the imperatives of the need for dialogue La Pira also had a somewhat sympathetic reading of Communism as a world movement. He resolutely resisted its materialism and its atheism (which he considered dehumanizing) but was powerfully impressed by its messianic claims, its sense of the inevitable movement of history and its international dimensions. All Communism needed, La Pira believed, was a mystical or contemplative dimension. In an extraordinary letter to Nikita Khrushchev (written in 1957) he begged the Soviet leader to free the church. If he would do that, La Pira promised, God would make him a believer and, following that, a builder of human solidarity. In perfect harmony with his Constantinian vision of the church, La Pira assured Khrushchev that he could be numbered among the great leaders of history; leaders like Constantine, Clovis and Charlemagne! This was not mere hyperbole on La Pira's part; a decade later he told Father Balducci that he thought the times mature for Pope Paul and Mao to do for the world what Pope Sylvester and Constantine had done centuries before.

La Pira and the other Christian Democrats lost the electoral majority to the Communists in 1964. Some thought that the increased vote for the Communists could be partially explained by La Pira's own sympathy for the Left. At any rate, La Pira not only lost his mayoral office but more and more was emarginated within the ranks of the Christian Democratic party itself. One telling sign of the ambiguity with which the "Catholic Party" viewed La Pira is the fact that he was never asked to be part of any of the lay commissions or consultancies that clustered around the preparatory phases of the Second Vatican Council, this despite his thoroughgoing orthodoxy, his evident spirituality and his intense concern for the church in the world arena.

In the last decade of his life, La Pira

devoted more of his energies to prayer and solitude. Despite this contemplative concern his efforts at "bridge building" continued. He made a trip to Vietnam in the Sixties to visit Ho Chi Minh where he attempted to open an exchange of views between the Americans and the North Vietnamese with A. Fanfani (then at the UN) being intermediary. In the early Seventies he went to Chile to see the effects of the first democratically elected Marxist government in the world.

During this same period La Pira continued to write essays and books on a wide variety of subjects: Savonarola, biblical themes in Michelangelo; disarmament; on "utopia as the true meaning of history"; on the "materialism" of the Resurrection; on the youth revolt in Europe, etc. La Pira died in 1977. After his death there was the immediate beginnings of what surely will be a flood of publications and studies by and about him. His letters to Amintore Fanfani have already been published in Italy. A continuing seminar on his thought and its application has already begun at Catanzaro with the announced intention of publishing annual volumes of research derived from La Pira's life and work. We also have the issue of *Testimonianze*

(which would make a hefty book) alluded to in the beginning of this article.

Giorgio La Pira left a sure mark on Italian life and politics. What is more interesting about La Pira is the style of his life. Karl Rahner once wrote that saints are saints because they reveal a new way of living the Christian life peculiar to the time in which they live. La Pira's spiritual development came in that tension-filled period before the Second Vatican Council when new stirrings of theology and spirituality were in the air but were still in the process of becoming. La Pira grew and was nourished by the older spirituality of Neo-Thomism, Personalism and traditional concepts of social action (he was active for years in the Saint Vincent de Paul Society). He took, almost as a motto, the dictum of St. Thomas that contemplation was the purpose and goal of all created being: *contemplatio est finis totius creationis*. For La Pira all political and social impulses derived from the fundamental *prius* of knowing and adoring God. La Pira never wavered from that basic stance although, as Father Balducci noted, the practical difficulty of linking contemplation and *praxis* became more apparent when La Pira entered public life, an arena far more

complex than the homogeneous community of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society.

La Pira's spirituality was ahistorical in character; it derived exclusively from the philosophy of *esse* that he had been nurtured on from his youth. To understand the difference of La Pira's spirituality from that of a spirituality which takes more seriously the character of specific historical circumstance one would have to compare La Pira with someone like Archbishop Helder Camara of Recife or Father Ernesto Cardenal of Nicaragua. Such a juxtaposition is not meant as a denigration of what La Pira stood for. La Pira's life clearly stands for all that was best in pre-Vatican II spirituality. For those who are tempted to patronize such a way of life, it is chastening to remember that many of the authentically holy people of our era—one thinks immediately of Mother Teresa, Pope John, or Dorothy Day—were nurtured on the spirituality of the pre-conciliar church. Tarrou, a character in Camus's novel *The Plague* said that he wanted to be a saint, a new kind of saint for an age which did not believe in God. He failed in that desire but persons like Giorgia La Pira testify that such lives are not an impossibility in this day.

Books: **RFK: AN UNFINISHED MAN**

ROBERT Kennedy has proved as controversial in death as in life. The reviews in the Irish and English papers have been the occasion for personal explanations and, indeed, explosions of emotion from reviewers and I gather the same has been true in the United States.

Thus, the reviewer in the *Irish Times* confessed he "hated" Kennedy as much today as he did when Kennedy was alive, and he followed through on that emotion with an astonishingly fierce attack on the subject and the book. The critic in the *Irish Press*, although more temperate, also rendered a severe indictment. And this in a country where the Kennedys are

ROBERT KENNEDY AND HIS TIMES

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.

Houghton, Mifflin, \$19.95, 916 pp.

William V. Shannon

widely admired and President Kennedy is venerated.

In England, the *New Statesman* reviewer confessed to a personal distaste for Robert Kennedy before he struggled through to a reasonably balanced judgment. In the anonymous and normally impersonal pages of *The Economist*, the critic began a laudatory review: "All

cards on the table: this reviewer thinks that Robert Kennedy was one of the sanest and most sensitive people in public life in the 1960s."

I, too, have a personal statement to make which I hope will illuminate not merely my own position but also, and more important, the controversy over this book. I knew Robert Kennedy and wrote a book about him (*The Heir Apparent* published in 1967 and now out of print) which in a much less ambitious way pursued the same theme which preoccupies Schlesinger: how did Robert Kennedy grow and change, particularly in the three years after his brother's as-

sassination when he made the transition from agent, adviser and political manager to the role of leader in his own right? But I made no attempt to establish anything like the emotional intimacy with my subject which is such a distinguishing feature of the Schlesinger book. On the contrary, I preferred to maintain an arm's-length relationship with Robert Kennedy. That might seem an odd stance for a biographer to adopt, but it was founded in personal experience. Through several national political campaigns, I had gradually learned that if I felt strongly about a politician, I should either go to work for him or guard my independence jealously from the outset.

I followed this rule when President Kennedy entered the White House. Having declined an offer to join his staff, I was content to keep my distance from him and to criticize his policies as I saw fit. With his poised, ironic cast of mind, John Kennedy had no difficulty with this kind of detachment.

Robert Kennedy, by contrast, was temperamentally a true believer, an impatient activist, a man of passion and impulse. Sitting next to my wife at a dinner party in 1963, he confessed that some of my columns criticizing his brother made him "furious." My wife responded that one could occupy middle ground, being sympathetic yet critical. He concluded that part of the conversation by observing that it was difficult to know whether I was "with us or against us."

This outlook remained with him to the end. He only felt at ease with persons when he was sure of their personal loyalty or their ideological commitment. And this brings me at long last to the Schlesinger book. Schlesinger did go to work for John Kennedy and did become a close friend, confidante, and political emissary of Robert Kennedy. Because Robert Kennedy was the kind of man he was, only a personal intimate could have gained the first-hand knowledge that undergirds this book. Schlesinger distinguishes, mistakenly I believe, between this book and his earlier work on the Kennedy administration, *A Thousand Days*, calling the latter a personal memoir and this a biography. In fact, this

seems even more of a memoir because he was personally closer to Robert than to John and a more central figure in the Kennedy politics of 1967-68 than those of 1960-63. Many of the most interesting passages in this book are based on his own journal. Although a distinguished historian, Schlesinger is writing here as a participant as well as an observer.

If accepted on this premise, the book is a splendid piece of work, comprehensive, accurate, richly detailed and well-written. We can be grateful that Robert Kennedy had in his inner circle a trained historian of such luminous intelligence and the master of such a virtuoso style. No contemporary who tried to maintain as I did an arms-length relationship with his subject and no historian of a future generation coming cold to the evidence could possibly present readers with this feast of detailed information, delineate the many actors in the crowded scene with such authority, or recreate the emotional atmosphere so credibly. It is unreasonable to fault Schlesinger for failing to analyze and judge Kennedy coolly; the book at times is infused with some of the passion of its subject. What else does one expect from a close friend? It is reasonable to ask that the author, regardless of his emotional commitment, lay out the evidence honestly and state the issues clearly. Schlesinger easily meets those two criteria. There is abundant evidence

here with which readers can make up their own minds and, if they wish, reach conclusions different from those arrived at by the author.

And what of Robert Kennedy himself? He died an unfinished man. In the years leading up to his death when I came to know him best, I often experienced—but usually resisted—a curious impulse to give him fatherly advice. I say "curious" inasmuch as we were almost exact contemporaries and I had no reason to think he would welcome or heed my advice. Yet I kept wanting to say to him—don't fly in single-engined planes, don't paddle boats in white water, and for everyone's sake, don't plunge into crowds or ride in motorcades.

If Providence had been kind to him, it would have devised a means of keeping him out of the 1968 presidential campaign and giving him more time to reflect and to grow. If he had lived and been elected at 43 in 1968, he would certainly have been a good president. All that energy, moralism, humane concern for the underdog, and political skill would have achieved considerable good. If he had been elected four or eight or a dozen years later, he would have been even better, wiser, more thoughtful, more far-sighted. But he always went rushing through each day as if there were no tomorrows. And suddenly there were none.

Better than their covers

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS VOLS. 1-8

Consortium, \$9.50 each, \$5.95 paper

Henry Warner Bowden

REVIEWS covering books in a series are tricky things to get off the ground, and in introducing readers to the whole set, one metaphor that suggests itself is the flight pattern of an airplane. If centuries can be considered equivalent to thousands of feet, the series' first volume begins slowly by taking the reader from a standstill up to 4000 feet, surveying two centuries before and after the life of

Christ. Then the second volume makes a sharp climb, moving rapidly through twelve centuries from the end of the Roman Empire to sixteenth century reformation efforts by Catholics and emerging Protestant bodies. The series begins to level off after that, with the third book depicting events in the seventeenth century; the fourth, about three-quarters of the eighteenth century; the fifth, sixth and seventh fairly steadily moving up through subsequent halves of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The final volume leaves reader-passengers cruising along at about twenty thousand feet by covering developments between 1955 and 1975. Just as

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the main concern of an airplane is to get up in the air quickly, so this series moves with great speed through early chapters of Western church history and concentrates primarily on the American religious experience with some of its British antecedents.

Another illustration useful in describing these eight volumes is a bell-shaped curve plotted on graph paper. If we use conceptual clarity, literary style and basic quality of information as criteria for moving up the graph, the bell curve characterizes this series fairly accurately. The earliest volume moves slowly and steadily upward, while the second moves to an astonishingly high level of accomplishment. The third, fourth and fifth books form the peak of a curve, while the sixth one plunges back into mediocrity again. An exception to the symmetry of this metaphor is the seventh book because it is unquestionably the worst production of the series. Volume eight rises considerably above that nadir, but not enough to restore the quality achieved by middle units of the group.

Perhaps we should abandon metaphors now because such figures of speech are useful only to indicate that the series is uneven. It comprises books of divergent chronological parameters, various interests brought to the work by different authors and fluctuating abilities to keep readers interested in their segment of the total survey. All of them are written to reach a wide general readership. Scholarly competence undergirds most of the volumes, but the technical impediments of specialized studies are carefully avoided to expand the set's appeal to as wide an audience as possible. Though it is never stated anywhere, the editor at Consortium Books who was responsible for general guidelines in the series, Thomas Pearl, apparently urged each author to write for laymen and non-specialists. The result in some of the volumes is a popular and easily understood treatment of subject matter which does not sacrifice accuracy or sound interpretive standards.

A few more remarks about surface matters are in order before we move to specifics. Prospective readers are hereby advised to ignore the garish dust jackets

and their hard-sell promotion statements. Fortunately such excesses have little to do with what the books actually contain, but someone easily led by appearances could dismiss the substantial works for superficial reasons. The titles are misleading too; all volumes cover much more material than the outer designation would lead one to expect. Moreover, it is hard to find this out by any process other than reading each volume of the entire set because none of them contains an index. With inaccurate titles, no indexes and sometimes non-directive tables of contents, these books can serve only as introductions to their fields. Readers unacquainted with the general topic might profit from reading a selected volume. Once read, though, it would be difficult to use these books repeatedly as tools for quick-reference or for refreshing one's memory on a given topic.

Their continuing usefulness is further reduced by the fact that five of the eight have no reference notes at all. The other three are skimpy and rarely do they point readers to much extant material or guide them in pursuing a subject that interests them. Five of the eight (but not the same five) include lists of suggested readings. Some of these bibliographies cover their area well; others aid uninitiated readers in a minimal way, but since these volumes do not claim to be definitive, it is puzzling why three of them contain no references to further reading at all. Judging from their overall content and viewing them as a set, the books are overpriced at \$9.50 per volume. The "Spirit of 76" may be a figure worthy of support; the sum of \$76 for such a sketchy shelf of books is too much for any responsible publisher to ask. Readers will have to decide for themselves whether they can afford the price of discrete volumes which appeal to them.

Volume 1, *Jesus Christ* by E. Glenn Hinson, begins the series with a survey of the complex origins of Christianity. He treats post-exilic Judaism and the Hellenistic world as background for the life, ministry and passion of Jesus. A third part traces the gradual institutionalization of believing communities into churches with offices of leadership, creeds, liturgies and power to discipline.

Hinson covers much of the recent publishing behind a second, renewed quest for the historical Jesus, but most of the time his conclusions are conservative and traditional. As with many Protestant authors who tend to see their religious convictions reflected in primitive church examples, he also repeats the standard lament that by A.D. 200 developments began to "threaten and obscure the true character of Christianity."

Volume 2, *Reform and Renewal* by John Patrick Donnelly, S.J., is a masterpiece of compact generalization, literary grace and balanced historical judgment. It begins with the rise of Germanic kingdoms and monasteries, two institutions which helped perpetuate Christianity through trials to a time of flowering in crusades and strong theological schools. Donnelly then charts the decline of faith which stimulated reform efforts from dissimilar figures such as Erasmus, Luther, King Henry VIII and Pope Paul III. His narrative is well-paced, as his analysis is fair and penetrating. The scope of issues covered in these pages ranges from mysticism and doctrine to their tangled relationships with warfare and politics. Throughout the book, readers find themselves thinking of self-critical reform as a perennial objective for all churches if they wish to remain vital.

Volume 3, *The Pilgrims* by Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., covers much more than its title implies. Instead of centering on settlers at Plymouth, it accomplishes nothing less than a thorough delineation of all religious groups planted in the early American colonies. After discussing the English Reformation with its Anglican, Puritan and Scottish Presbyterian phases, Wallace traces the rise of the Church of England monopoly in Virginia as well as Puritan establishments in New England. Beyond that, he treats Catholic experience in all the colonies, dissenters such as Quakers and Baptists who influenced some colonies—Pennsylvania and Rhode Island respectively—and dozens of minorities identified by confessional, national or ethnic roots. Broadly inclusive and generously proportioned, it provides adequate information on the beginnings of most groups which later formed

strong American denominations.

Volume 4, *Religion, Awakening and Revolution* by Martin E. Marty, deals with decades between the Great Awakening and the Revolutionary War. But in fact it turns out to cover most types of religious expression by the American people through the eighteenth century. Marty includes Indians, Blacks and other fringe groups for whom mainline Christianity offered little. Then he outlines the emergence, and explains the meaning, of revivals which changed religious standards in this country for all time to come. Using the same topical and sociological framework, he discusses political debates, revolutionary action and the way in which different classes of people reacted to enthusiasm for independence. He provides standard coverage of revivalism and libertarian ideology of that century, without relying upon or referring to any of the controversial theories about religion and revolution that have surfaced in the last decade.

Volume 5, *A New Christian Nation* by Louis B. Weeks, tries a thematic approach instead of straight chronological coverage in the early national period. It also sacrifices a great deal of the complexity of the early 1800s by selecting representative groups and individuals to highlight central issues. Standard components of church history are not lacking here, but most of the embellishing variations and minority voices have been omitted. In chronicling the growth of churches, Weeks follows the rise of pre-Civil War denominations as they benefited from frontier conditions while erstwhile powers failed to grow under republican conditions. He includes some discussion of Catholicism and Judaism plus a great deal on communitarian experiments which were in vogue at that time. Using three theologians to give the flavor of religious thought and three controversial issues to show the impulse for social reform, he brings readers rapidly past the half-century mark to the eve of another war.

Volume 6, *The Church Goes West* by Myron J. Fogde, is the most curiously titled book of the series because only one-sixth of the volume deals with the topic. In long, rambling paragraphs (one

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covers almost two full pages) the author treats familiar issues such as theological strains between liberals and fundamentalists, growing industrialism and increased need for social ethics, urbanism and the general failure of Protestant churches to meet new human conditions with a creative gospel message. Fogde deals adequately with urban revivalism and the spirit of robust nationalism that lay behind both foreign missions and domestic reforms before 1914. The only fresh material provided relates to missions and church growth in the trans-Mississippi, Intermountain West, his area of special competence. Written along a simple interpretational line, it could prove informative as an introductory text for the period.

Volume 7, *Destiny and Disappointment* by Raymond H. Bailey, tries with limited success to bridge the years from 1900 to the end of World War II. Viewing American religion as if it were reflected by the total fabric of national life, the author feels free to range impressionistically over foreign policy, business, social relations, recreation, morals and changing political values for his cues and guidelines. In the hands of a master craftsman such a viewpoint might yield an important book; the present sorry effort is nothing more than a hodgepodge of data which apparently could not even satisfy the series editor. A supplementary

chapter by Ira V. Birdwhistell is inserted with no explanation at all. In a series marked by poor typesetting, this volume is a compositor's disaster. One gauge of Bailey's lack of concern about his finished work is the fact that at least 124 errors remain on 140 printed pages.

Volume 8, *Change and Challenge* by Jonathan A. Lindsey, is a happy return to competence as it touches on the kaleidoscopic events of recent decades. As with many of these books, this one overlaps some of the earlier coverage and repeats (often with improvement) analyses of persons previously mentioned. Lindsey places the 1955-75 years in context and brings them to life, giving them perhaps more interpretive meaning than they had at the time of living them. He treats the complexities of contemporary life with discernment and understanding. Though it too could have benefited from an updated manuscript and better proofreading, as final volume in the series it ends the whole set on a note of competence and learning sensitively communicated.

So the set concludes. Its content is better than its outer packaging indicates. Its value for beginners remains despite the fact that it offers them little other than spare prose. Few will wish to acquire the total of eight volumes, but some may acquire the ones which flesh out their overall knowledge of religious experience in America.

Death has some dominion

THE AGE OF ATROCITY:

DEATH IN MODERN LITERATURE

Lawrence L. Langer

Beacon Press, \$12.95, 256 pp.

Richard L. Schoenwald

LAURENCE Langer, a professor of English at Simmons College, here continues the study of the meaning of death in the twentieth century that he began in *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination*. Mass death imposed on thousands and millions who cannot gather any glimmer of explanation for why they should die has transformed all ideas of death, according to Langer. The

experience of atrocity is summed up for him in the Holocaust-branded child who, seeing a funeral some time after the liberation of the extermination camps, beholds the single coffin and asks: " 'But where are the *other* dead people?' " (xi)

Langer has an Edmund Wilson-esque gift for finding books so intriguing that you wish life could go on forever just to let you read them all. He counterpoints John Gunther's generation-old account of his son's death and Lael Wertenbaker's 1950s memoir of her dying husband against a collection of letters by people under Nazi sentence of death, and a meditation by Jean Améry on the experience of being tortured during the sec-

My own investigation convinces me that the twentieth-century mind, goaded by the insights of Freud and his successors and harassed by the experience of atrocity, has been less dependent on common assumptions about death than its ancestors, and has struck out in fresh directions to open up vistas that we have yet to absorb. . . . The implications of atrocity, of death as a generally inappropriate end despite its eventual necessity, are making slow inroads on our intelligence and emotions, but we will have to undergo a long period of synthesis before we can grasp their meanings. The hope for a single meaning is futile.

—The Age of Atrocity

and World War. Generally the writing is felicitous, though overwriting mars a few passages. A kind of giddiness does ensue, not through any fault of Langer's, but from trying to absorb so much on the subject of death.

Four writers receive major attention. Thomas Mann in *The Magic Mountain* tried to uncover the meaning of physical wasting caused by tuberculosis within a whole world dying morally on the eve of 1914. At the end he wondered whether Love might not yet triumph above the war's putrefying casualties. Mann had a sense of something above, beyond, deeper, a sense that the world held meaning of a "spiritual" kind that went beyond palpable reality. For Camus, and for Langer, transcendence is ruled out. The only problem becomes how to accept the world as it is and manage to act within "the limits of the possible," a phrase from the title of the chapter on Camus. The enormity of the Gulag horror in Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and *Cancer Ward* almost obliterates anything but pain and extinction, yet love lingers, spectrally, at the edge of reality. (Strangely, Langer remains silent on Solzhenitsyn's well-known religiosity, observing only that "in some of his public statements Solzhenitsyn adopts the pose of a moral crusader" [166].) The French writer Charlotte Delbo, as she reports in a tril-

ogy about her concentration camp experience, can scarcely free herself from domination by that experience: life itself has become second-best, an inferior universe dulled and blunted.

It is foolishness to deny the continuing presence of what Langer calls "atrocity," but it is also foolishness, I think, to believe that atrocity, and atrocity alone, holds sway in life today. Professors of English fall prey to a weakness like the resort of some historians to "the intellectualist fallacy": writers, people who are good with words, come out of the real world, and their job is to articulate what the real world is like; therefore what they say represents the feelings and beliefs that actually exist in men and women in the real world, who otherwise, were it not for these writers, would only go about their business hugging their attitudes and beliefs to resolutely inarticulate hearts.

Death has dominion, but its rule is not yet absolute and unchallenged. That is the meaning of the recent Gallup finding that 57 percent of the unchurched still believe in life after death, and 68 percent believe in the resurrection of Jesus (*New York Times*, June 20, 1978).

Langer has not made full allowance for the fact that as the language of transcendence became unacceptable in the nineteenth century, belief in the possibility of transcendence really did not. In the nineteenth century, and the twentieth, art draws mortals onward who can no longer voice religious formulas. Sickened at Madame Bovary's agony after she eats arsenic, readers find rescue by realizing suddenly that Flaubert did it all with words. Madame Bovary dies, but the novel asserts forever that she has lived: miserable death does not triumph finally. A few decades ago the conductor Otto Klemperer, long paralyzed, stood for the first time during a performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. He had reached the point in the opera at which the statue of the unjustly slain Commander came to life and appeared on stage. The statue's entrance led to the fulfillment, in life, of a moral aim frustrated at death. Mozart had dramatized the incompleteness of death's dominion. Klemperer recognized the reality of transcendence, and it pulled



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him up and out of the near-death of paralysis.

The painter Barnett Newman, warned by a heart attack, attached himself to universal mortality and immortality by embarking on a series of newly daring canvases that became "The Stations of the Cross." Monet fancied himself a secularist, yet early critical response to his series of poplars in ever changing light found in them precisely an effort to replace transience by transcendence. Monet feared the dark, which suggested

death, but he was not afraid to paint the play of light on his dead wife's face, though he felt shocked when he caught himself acting his usual role, the practitioner of art.

There is an everlasting going down into death, crueler and more difficult to bear now. Langer observes a few times that the making of art, the writing of the books he discusses, represents a step beyond mere immersion in atrocity. He should have developed and stressed more strongly the meaning of such strategy.

The editor's editor

MAX PERKINS:

EDITOR OF GENIUS

A. Scott Berg

Dutton, \$15, 498 pp.

Robert Emmet Long

MAXWELL Perkins was a legend in his own time, and eventually passed into fiction as Foxhall Edwards in Thomas Wolfe's *You Can't Go Home Again*, and in novels by Hamilton Basso and Taylor Caldwell. Yet until now no biography has been written about him. A. Scott Berg's *Max Perkins: Editor of Genius* clearly fills this need, and, moreover, is a hugely informative work.

Maxwell Evarts Perkins was descended from old New England families, his forebears including William Maxwell Evarts, United States Senator and Secretary of State under President Hayes, and Charles Callaghan Perkins, son of a

wealthy and philanthropic Boston merchant who became America's first art critic, writing major studies of European sculpture. If the Evarts were the embodiment of public service and personal discipline, the Perkinses represented a spirit of aestheticism, and these two different qualities were incorporated into the character of Perkins himself. Anyone who has read the published letters of Perkins will recognize the character of the man, the sense they give of a spare, measured, and somewhat conservative Yankee probity, together with an out-reaching receptiveness to imaginative writing that is bold and living. They were qualities that helped to make Perkins the editor's editor.

As Berg explains, when Perkins graduated from Harvard in 1907, he was far from being well off. His father died in his mid forties, and his estate was small, so that Perkins's assets were chiefly his Yankee "character." He went to work as a cub reporter for the *New York Times*, and two years later was hired as advertising manager for Scribners. By 1914, when he was moved up to the editorial offices, he had married Louise Saunders, and they had the first three of their five daughters. There were to be no sons, and Perkins was to live, at times reluctantly, surrounded by women. As an editor, he displayed a number of eccentricities. He had a lectern-desk installed in his office, before which he stood working over manuscripts, with one leg sometimes raised up against the other, giving him the appearance of a stork. Later, he

worked in his office with his hat on, and was so oblivious of everything except what he was reading that when a fire started in his wastebasket, and smoke began to fill the room, he never noticed, and continued with his work.

Perkins's marriage was not entirely happy. Louise Perkins worked in amateur theater, and had aspirations of becoming an actress, but Perkins was unsympathetic to her ambitions. By middle age, she felt the resentment of a woman who has been deprived of a life of her own, and the tensions between the two increased. Later, she converted to Catholicism, and attempted ceaselessly to convert Perkins, who sometimes came home from work to find his parlor filled with priests and nuns. There was also another woman in Perkins's life, Elizabeth Lemmon, an attractive woman belonging to a wealthy Virginia family, with whom Perkins corresponded for years. Their relationship, however, was purely platonic, for there was far too much starch in Perkins's nature for him to enter into an affair with her. At a restaurant, he reached out his hand to her without quite touching her, and said, "Elizabeth . . . I can't."

Perkins's personal history, however, forms only a portion of the book, for Berg has actually written four biographies in one, giving extended attention to three of his most famous authors—F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Thomas Wolfe. Many of Perkins's other authors (some with famous names)

REVIEWERS

WILLIAM V. SHANNON, formerly of the *New York Times* and political correspondent for *Commonweal*, is presently United States Ambassador to Ireland.

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FATHER JOHN L. MCKENZIE is the author of *The Old Testament Without Illusion* (Thomas More).

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appear in the book; and Berg reveals Perkins's gift for identifying talented writers (sometimes merely by meeting them, without as yet seeing anything they had written), helping them to see the structure and form for their work, and making them share his belief in them. But it is Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Wolfe who have spacious prominence in the work, and who most often engage the reader's interest.

Quite a bit of the anecdotal material dealing with Fitzgerald and Hemingway seems hoary with age, and there are few new revelations about them, and yet they appear living and real, with the charm and vulnerability that fascinated other biographers. To the extent that there is an emotional center in a work so objective, it is the section dealing with Wolfe, who became the son Perkins never had. Wolfe invaded not only Perkins's office at Scribners, but also his home on East 49th

Street. Wolfe's emotionalism was gargantuan, and endless scenes were played out, involving Perkins in a crossfire between Wolfe and his cast-off but still hysterically clinging lover Aline Bernstein. Perhaps nowhere in the history of publishing has an editor given so much of himself for a gifted but chaotic young writer. Ironically, however, it was through Wolfe that Perkins lived most deeply, and after Wolfe's death in 1938, Perkins seemed to lose interest in life, withdrawing more and more into his work, and dying in 1947 of pneumonia, but actually of overwork and exhaustion. In Berg's biography, Perkins is often eclipsed by the authors he devotedly served, but the essence of Maxwell Perkins is felt. One finishes the biography with the impression, particularly in comparison with the more commercialized world of publishing today, that Perkins was a man of towering integrity.

Poor boy makes bad

FOOLS DIE

Mario Puzo

Putnam, \$12.50, 572 pp.

John Druska

"I HAVE written three novels," Mario Puzo said in *The Godfather Papers*. "*The Godfather* is not as good as the preceding two." But since the latter netted him just \$3500 and \$3000, he was moved to overcome his naiveté about publishers—a notion "that (they) cared about art"—and to capitalize on the business of writing not only publishable best-sellers, but filmable ones. It's paid off so handsomely that Puzo has continued his walk along the downward path to popular wisdom by penning a novel he'd probably be the first to rank below *The Godfather*.

Awkwardly narrated from multiple, randomly juggled points-of-view, *Fools Die* roughly sketches the interlocked histories of honchos in several familiar Puzo worlds: "the poor struggling genius world, the crooked world and the classy literary world. All this laced with plenty

of sex, some complicated ideas you won't be hit over the head with and may even find interesting."

The prose throughout sounds as uniformly infelicitous, as profoundly superficial and pretentiously didactic, as the above quote from the surviving kernel of a late great novelist's unfinished masterpiece, which Puzo invents to instigate the telling of his hero Merlyn's adventures. (That departure in spelling from the hero's magical namesake is about the extent of symbolic subtlety here.)

I admire Mario Puzo's perceptions of ethnic life (see *The Fortunate Pilgrim* and *The Godfather Papers*); I sympathize with his poor boy's sense of the unprivileged writer's struggle in commercialized and stratified America. And his bravado in concocting *Fools Die*—the stunts he pulls to support a structure on the immense scale he's conceived—reveals at least shadows of a real novelist's daring. I understand Puzo more than I do some of the critics who've panned this book because of its trash appeal; I share his feelings that a lot of those who've been set up to pass judgment on writers, to enshrine art for us, have got-

ten to do so because their privilege affords them this privilege. They might rap *Fools Die* as a bad novel; I'm more concerned that it's bad Puzo.

Putnam's "First Impression" of *Fools Die* appears a shoddy offset job whose print fades on some pages and, in the case of odd letters, vanishes. Puzo's role in compiling this package marks him a degenerate novelist akin to those Vegas rollers he portrays as "degenerate gamblers." To direct his picaresque actions toward some semblance of an ending Puzo resorts to the old Hollywood tricks (stolen from classical tragedy and diluted through melodrama) of entrapping most of his characters in their foibles and/or the accidents of fortune, and punishing their missteps with death. As he lets death, with gratuitous regularity, level his actors for him and punctuate his novel much as it does the TV news, Puzo levels the practice of his craft and art to arch craftiness. And just in case Hollywood doesn't pick up an option on this book, he's stacked it with subplots enough to stake some needy TV network to at least a lucrative mini-series.

Mario Puzo started his career trying to crash the top floors of literary fame; he seems stuck now going around in that old revolving door of success, which leads to literature's bargain basement. If his middle-classifying of the novelist's art has been admirable in light of his turning Wasp-spun American dreams to an ethnic-outcast's uses, his demoralizing performance of his art today is reprehensible to the extent that it claims more and more, through his perpetuation of American pulp. Puzo's talents and conscience, reducing a calculated poor-boy's con to another establishment scam,

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equating him with his sold-out characters.

Puzo's alter ego Merlyn, one of the few surviving stars in *Fools Die*, talks superciliously about fools dying, though he gets hemmed in a little himself by death at the end. But if Puzo's sort of fools deserve to die. Puzo-Merlyn the novelist, ego-tripping along, has been writing a while already on borrowed time.

In brief

IS CHRIST THE END OF THE LAW? by Gerard S. Sloyan, Westminster, \$4.95, 209 pp.

Sloyan attempts to show the continuity of Israelite religion, Judaism and Christianity. This is not the same as the unity of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Certainly the recent history of the relations between Jews and Gentiles justifies any attempt to move towards a rapprochement which will lead to a more humane set of relations in the fu-

ture. This effort is written with profound learning and genuine understanding. Yet I am compelled to ask whether the book may not seek an irenicism which is impossible. Humane relations between Jews and Christians must be sought in the face of an irreconcilable theological opposition. Jews have always been candid in stating that the fundamental tenet of Judaism, perhaps the only tenet on which all Jews agree, is that Jesus was not the Messiah. Both Jews and Christians agree that this opposition can be resolved only if Jews cease to be Jews or Christians cease to be Christians.

It is, however, a point of difference between Christian theologians whether Jesus and Paul totally rejected the Law as a principle of salvation. Here S. and I differ, and neither of us stands alone in his position. Nor can either of us establish his position with that conviction which ends all dispute. I am ready to admit that it has been difficult to keep the difference in views purely theological. But I do not believe it is quite fair to maintain that National Socialism was the issue of a theological dispute. Nor do I believe that the late Adolf Hitler should influence my judgment of a theological problem which is far more ancient than Hitler, and clearly outlives him. I do not mean to imply that S.'s work carries this implication. A more subtle threat, I think, is that out of a desire to avoid offense we may concede that we know so little of Jesus that it becomes impossible to state except in bland generalities what he represents. Paul shows almost no knowledge of "the historical Jesus," but his response to Jesus is abundantly clear.

JOHN L. MCKENZIE

reputation for liberalism under Jack Sayers in the 1960s. . . . It has always had a readership in both parts of the community in the North and has regarded all six counties as its area of distribution. . . . It has been distinguished by the courage and perseverance not only of Mr. Lilley but of those who write, print and distribute it, and thus carry on a tradition that newspapermen generally are expected to have in their professional knapsacks but less frequently are called on to use."

Two examples are probably enough for your readers, if this reaches them; but there are plenty more: another editor came between Sayers and Lilley—Eugene Wason—and earned similar praise.

I am not in the paper's employ: I am a retired schoolmaster, the institution where I last served has as the motto under its coat of arms "*Quaerere verum*."

HUGH C. FAY

Back to natural

Lancaster, Pa.

To the Editor: I would like to refer you and D. W. Odell [Correspondence, November 24] to a book which addresses the whole question of the interplay between human sexuality and natural family planning. The book is *Natural Sex* by Mary Shivanandan [Rawson, Wade (Atheneum, dist.) \$12.50, paper \$6.95].

Publishers Weekly (November 27) says of Ms. Shivanandan, "Her thesis is that a natural (i.e., rewarding, uninhibited, satisfying) sex life must include a natural method of contraception. . . . The book is a boon to those dissatisfied and/or worried over the often harmful effects of available contraceptives, as well as to those whose religions ban their use."

ROBERT KAMBIC

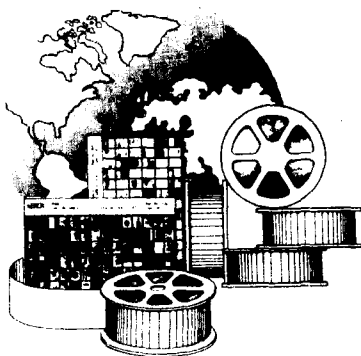
Director, Natural Family Planning
St. Joseph Hospital

New Right (to life)

Clifton, N.J.

To the Editors: Your editorial "Military and the Military" [Dec. 22] calls to mind a UPI interview last month with

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Correspondence

(Continued from page 66)

1977, "The Golden Pen of Freedom," awarded by the Newspaper Society of Britain. Of Britain, yes; but hear the *Irish Times* from Dublin: "The Newspaper Society in Britain has chosen a good man for its Golden Pen of Freedom award in Mr. Roy Lilley, Editor of the *Belfast Telegraph*. The *Telegraph* earned a fine

Paul Brown, director of the Life Amendment Political Action Committee, in which he listed the intended victims of that group's hit list for 1980 as Senators Bayh, Packwood, Leahy, McGovern, Culver and Church. He added that nothing short of "co-sponsoring the human life amendment"—no vote that these men could cast in future on abortion or any other subject—would induce his committee to spare any effort to defeat them.

But then he admitted that other Senators whose voting record on *abortion* is no different from these six had nothing to fear from his committee, and specifically named Henry Jackson. The rather lame excuse he gave was that Jackson "consistently wins with 80 percent of the vote" and thus would be unbeatable. (How many Senators have won with 80 percent, and then been defeated six years later!) But the most curious point is that Jackson does not even come up for reelection until 1982—and we must ask why Brown singled him out for mention, rather than any other Senator.

It can hardly be a coincidence that the six intended victims of Brown's group are all now leaning toward support of SALT, or that all except Packwood opposed the Vietnam war, while Jackson is the most outspoken advocate of all-out military spending and a hawkish foreign policy on the Democratic side of the Senate aisle. In effect, Brown is telling Jackson and like-minded Senators to vote as they please on abortion, and not worry about its being used against them when they are up for reelection.

Is the Life Amendment Political Action Committee really the honest single-issue pressure group that it claims to be—or are the pious and well-meaning people who contribute money and volunteer labor to this cause being used by forces for whom abortion is not the sole issue, and is probably not even the most important issue?

T.S. HOLMAN

Investing in despots

Saxtons River, Vermont
To the Editors: Thomas Powers's

analysis of what brought the Shah of Iran to his present brink [Dec. 22] reveals a compelling bit of history. The tale of an outlandishly ambitious, tyrannical monarch faced with revolt of the very subjects he cosseted, educated and bought to administer his dream kingdom, has a quality of folklore. To our shame as Americans, we know that the monarch would not have reached his throne in the first place without support and arms provided by our own government. Thus, more shame to remember, has our government financed, trained and armed the henchmen of tyrants in Nicaragua and on still other continents.

Iran's rebellion of 1978 was of course not brought on only by its new intelligentsia, professionals, and technologists. The lesser classes, the laborers, the landless, impoverished, and in this Islam nation, the religious leaders, are in it. Time comes for oppressed people to revolt and 1978 was a timely year for uprisings.

Powers put the pith of the matter for us sharply: "What is downright incredible is the fond willingness of the United States to go along with this transparently nutty scheme, and to depend on the Shah's continued success for defense of the Middle Eastern oil which fuels the economies of Western Europe and Japan."

No one would question presidential need for advisors on international matters, whatever we may think about the quality of the advice from our several bureaus and departments which deal in spying. But how could any American President from the time of initial elevation of the present Shah, fail to know what was going to happen in Iran one day? Objections to despotism in Iran have been raised by Americans (and others) of many stripes, pundits, scholars, columnists, taxi drivers, international observers, commentators, people in the streets, at every obeisance of Washington to Iran's royal throne since Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's father ascended it fifty odd years ago.

While the CIA invests tax money in a "crisis-prediction center" to defend itself against White House censure, Americans who have not completely lost faith in the ballot box are perplexed with

inescapable puzzles. When and how can we elect a President with wit to perceive the dilemmas of local and international justice, and to recognize the lineaments of unfolding history? A President willing to honestly confront the manipulations of Pentagon, conglomerates and multi-national corporations? One able to scrutinize political strategy with a social conscience? There have been such candidates.

MARJORIE MURPHY

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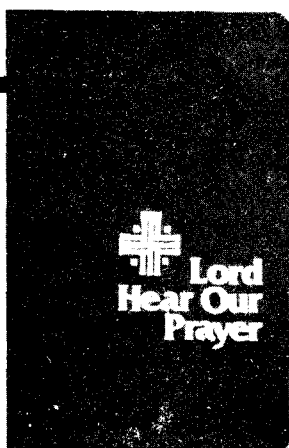
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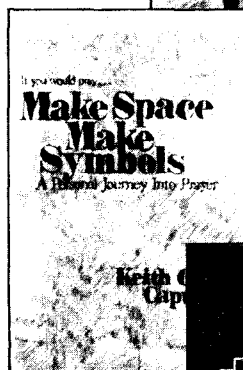
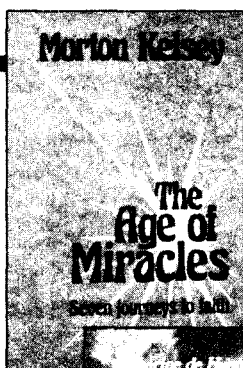
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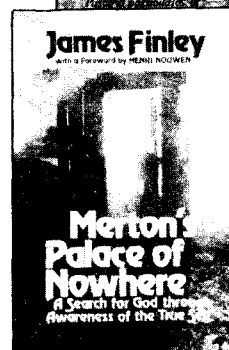
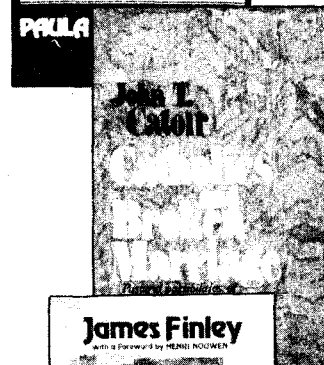
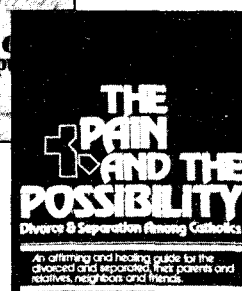
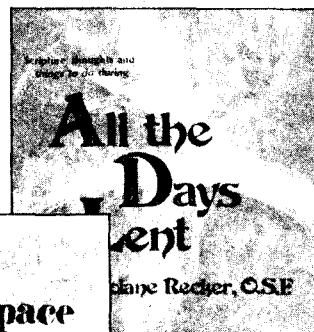
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